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Near East & South Asia

ISRAEL

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Regional Affairs

Syrian Link to Recent Violence Refuted

93AE0092A Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew
28 Oct 92 p 23

[Article by Y. Olmert]

[Text] There is something perplexing in the official Israeli reaction to the latest murderous attack in southern Lebanon. Official, unidentified army sources have claimed that there is no doubt that Syria is behind the attack. Afterward the chief of general staff declared that the Hizballah will pay for it, and the prime minister connected together, in his Knesset speech, the Hizballah, Syria, and the Government of Lebanon.

The Government of Lebanon is not the Hizballah, and the Hizballah is not Syria. Then who is Israel blaming? Would it be surprising that when our reaction reflects confusion, the opposing sides do not understand the message. What is the Israeli message, anyway?

It would be worthwhile making some order in the current labyrinth, so very typical of the wild Lebanese reality. The Hizballah do not need any special reason to attack Israel. With or without a political process, they are waging a holy war against us. In their eyes, Israel is a Jewish state whose very existence is a sin. Their struggle is not territorial or political. It is an uncompromising religious struggle. They are just like Hamas in the territories of Judaea, Samaria, and Gaza. There is no possibility of reaching any political settlement whatsoever, and their Iranian patrons use them to demonstrate the revolutionary cunning of the Islamic republic, while the distance between Israel and Tehran is their insurance policy. It is forbidden for the Hizballah to also have any sort of insurance policy.

For years, Israel has taken different tactics of fighting against the Hizballah, including a pointed attack against its leaders, as well as other painful blows. Together with this, two things typified the Israeli activity, which greatly reduced its effectiveness. First, Israel concentrated the majority of its efforts in southern Lebanon, and only rarely went outside of the fence. Second, the Israeli activity was not regular, sometimes reacting, and sometimes initiating, but not consistently and relentlessly. The Hizballah is a relentless organization, and so must be the activity against it.

Furthermore, the Hizballah's breeding ground and area of concentration are not in the south. They are in Lebanese Biq'a and in the Beirut region. Attacking the Hizballah in the south is like attacking the tail of a snake. Attacking it in the Biq'a and Beirut is like crushing the head of a snake.

It may be assumed that the main reason for the fact that there is no such Israeli activity is due to the Syrian presence in the Biq'a and Beirut. There is no certain proof that the Syrians are behind every murderous attack

of the Hizballah or of any other terrorist organization in Lebanon, but it is clear beyond any doubt that, if they wished, the Syrians could maintain an effective level of control over the terrorist organizations. Even so, it should not be assumed that it is possible to completely abolish terrorism in one stroke, but it would be possible to drastically reduce it.

The Syrians are not doing this for a great many reasons. They are not crazy about a frontal confrontation with the Lebanese Shi'ites, whose destructive force has been demonstrated in the past against western targets and is constantly demonstrated against us. They do not want to be confronted with Iran, with whom they have a long-term strategic treaty.

It is also clear that, as long as the Hizballah's activity is turned toward Israel in the south, causing it losses, no one will be crying unnecessary tears in Damascus. All the more so since Syria, itself, has never paid the price of Hizballah's terrorism.

A long while ago, Israel determined a firm rule regarding terrorism, that was based on the need to punish terrorists and those who aid them, everywhere. It appears that, through the years, Israel has abandoned this rule when speaking of the support that the Syrians are giving to terrorism in Lebanon.

There is no value to the frequent Israeli announcements in the matter of Syrian responsibility for terrorism in Lebanon when there are no accompanying acts either in the Biq'a or the Beirut region. The Syrians must understand that they are endangering their most essential interests in Lebanon when they continue their support of the Hizballah.

Syrian Strategy in Use of Terror Viewed

93AE0140A Tel Aviv YEDIO'T AHARONOT in Hebrew
12 Nov 92 p 23

[Article by Dani Leshem: "Assad Will Keep the Terror Option"]

[Text] Syria uses terror as a pressure tool not only against Israel. Assad has been using terror against other neighboring states for many years: against Jordan and against Lebanon, for example, among other things, to prevent them from reaching separate arrangements with Israel in the first half of the 1980's; against Turkey, for example, by means of the underground Kurdish organization PKK [Kurdish Workers Party] (a cruel and radical communist organization that operates from Iraqi territory).

'Assad, in my estimation, is interested in Hizballah activity against the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] and SLA [South Lebanese Army] and, occasionally, against the northern settlements, no less than the Iranians, the organization's patrons. The fact that an organization like 'Amal, that was supported for many years by the Syrians, is disarming, while Hizballah remains the only armed militia in South Lebanon, permits the implementation of

strikes or terrorist actions on a significant scale by an organization that is, as it were, outside their control. In my opinion the Syrians carried out a somewhat similar exercise relative to the Jibril organization, one of their favorites, which in recent years was transferred to Iranian protection even though it continues to operate and broadcast from Damascus. Recently it has even been learned that the Jibril organization operated from Damascus to assist the Muslim fundamentalist underground that was exposed in Jordan, the objective of which was the overthrow of the king and the establishment of an Islamic state.

The paradox is that 'Assad, who fought the Muslim Brotherhood with excessive cruelty in his own country, is assisting and facilitating assistance to fundamentalist organizations that are plotting to turn Lebanon and Jordan into Muslim states. The explanation is that there is a congruence of interests up to a certain point between his regime, Iran and various organizations under its protection. Each party to this unholy alliance knows what it can gain from it and what it cannot.

Nevertheless, 'Assad is apparently afraid at times of getting too involved in terrorist incidents and sabotage (as he was involved, for example, in the Hindawi incident at the time) and is making an effort to improve his image (or to reduce the damage), as he did recently when he apparently gave Husayn intelligence information on the Islamic underground in Jordan. The question is only whether 'Assad was not quick to transmit the information only after he had learned that the Jordanians had succeeded in exposing the underground activity and the cache of weapons at its disposal.

I would not suggest even to the Egyptians that they put too much stock in their good relations with 'Assad today preventing him from permitting organizations operating under Iranian control from Damascus and Lebanon to assist the fundamentalists who are working against the regime in Egypt.

I would not suggest that we ourselves rely upon the fact that if we succeed one day in signing peace agreements with the Syrians and the Lebanese that 'Assad's regime would stop using terrorist organizations against Israel for some purpose or other, as it did against Turkey, despite the fact that Syria was not in a state of war with her and she was not a party to the Arab-Israeli conflict. I would not rule out the possibility that his partnership with the Iranians in the area of terror would continue then, too, for one reason or another, even if he were to get the entire Golan back from Israel and the IDF were to leave south Lebanon.

The Syrians have, in fact, kept their separation agreements with Israel on the Golan Heights, but have also known how to get around them by using terror against Israel on the flanks of the Golan Heights (from the Jordanian border and in the Hermon sector) and, of course, in Lebanon, which was not part of the agreement. They know well how to keep agreements and how to get

around them at the same time. We should be careful not to have any illusions on this issue.

It might be worthwhile to point out to the Syrians that Israel, too, is capable, if she wants to, of assisting various militia groups in Lebanon that are dissatisfied with their permanent "temporary" presence and heavy-handed control in Lebanon, just as Iran and Syria are assisting Hizballah against Israel.

Internal Affairs

Status of Talks in Wake of Violence Discussed

Suspension Urged

93AE0091A Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew
28 Oct 92 p 19

[Editorial by 'Aharon Pa'po]

[Text] Arab terror is on the rise precisely because the withdrawal talks, or what in more esoteric terms are called "peace talks," are going on. It is not true that it is just the enemies of peace or the extremists who are using terror to sabotage the "peace prospects." It is precisely the PLO establishment and the top leadership of the Arab states who are using the tactic of carrying on negotiations in combination with massive terror. The idea behind their two-faced tactic is that this way, they can send a message to the citizens of Israel that the terror will continue to rise unless there is the complete withdrawal the Arabs demand.

The purpose of carrying on negotiations accompanied by terror is to undermine national morale, and encourage those segments of the population that are in any case politically convinced that the solution between Israel and the Arabs depends on total withdrawal and giving up the gains of the Six-Day War. In the opinion of the Arabs, the Jews of Israel are at the stage in any case of losing the motivation for war, and of making peace with withdrawal. "Another little push," the Arabs believe, "and Matzada will fall."

They have some support for this view. They read and hear those political voices on the left and in the media that have succeeded in convincing a broad public to vote for a government that will give up the territories. Just a little more terror, the Arabs are convinced, and Israel will withdraw to the impossible borders of 1967.

The Arabs tried this tactic successfully in the Algerian War of 1957-62. The longer the negotiations continued at Evian over French withdrawal from all of Algeria and the declaration of Arab independence there, the more the anti-French terror there increased. The Arabs were successful then with their method, and General de Gaulle, who came to power with the implied promise to the Frenchmen of Algiers that he would defend them, and that Algeria would remain French, retreated before the Arab terror. The generals who conspired against him,

Sal'an and Ma'si, were arrested, and "the Black Legs," that is the French and Jews, a million people in all, were forced to emigrate from Algeria to France.

There is no doubt that the Algerian example serves as a lamp unto the feet of the Arabs in conducting negotiations with the Rabin government. By intensifying the terror, they hope to force the government into submission. There is no lack of Jews ready to submit to this blackmail. Yesterday, Ran Cohen of "Meretz" justified continuing the negotiations under any conditions, with the argument that "sometimes terror comes along with negotiations." Shim'on Peres, too, declared in Spain the day before yesterday—after the sabotage bombing where five soldiers were killed—that he was optimistic about the negotiations.

But the government is wrong. What was possible in Algeria, thousands of miles from the metropolis, is not possible for us. And just as De Gaulle did not dream of retreating from Paris, Nice, Lyon, or Calais, under pressure of terror (and he proved this with his steadfast war against the Germans), so Rabin must not retreat under the blackmail of Arab terror.

This is the time to announce that the Government of Israel will leave the peace talks until it receives reliable assurances from Syria and Jordan that the terror will stop completely. Israel must not carry on negotiations under a murder ultimatum. That would be a terrible show of weakness.

Continuation Encouraged

93AE0091B Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew
28 Oct 92 p 19

[Editorial by 'Ori 'Or]

[Text] The terrorist organizations, headed by the rejectionist front, the Hizballah, and Hamas, which show their opposition to any peace process in the region by stepping up the killing and murder of Israeli citizens and soldiers, both within the security zone and in other parts of the state, both within and outside of the green line—these murder organizations, who met in an emergency conference in Damascus on September 13 to "deal" with what seems to them the beginning of a chance for movement in the political negotiations, reached decisions on two modes of action:

First, increase the political and diplomatic pressure on the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks with Israel, to force suspension of the talks.

Second, increase acts of terror against Jews and against Arabs (who are collaborators, according to them).

The purpose of terrorism is precisely what it says, to sow deep fear. Its goal is to ignite and intensify the hatred between peoples and widen the circle of populations who unwillingly take an active part in the Israeli-Arab dispute. Its goal is to create total chaos and to intensify

polarization within the Jewish population, and between the Jewish and Arab populations.

Wide segments within the opposition are calling for an end to the peace talks in the wake of the rise in the terror. Their call plays into the hands of the terrorist organizations and the rejectionist front, whose goal is to put an end to the political negotiations. Some of them even go as far as to blame the government and the defense minister for the rise in the terror.

I suggest to those who exploit every terrorist act for political gain and tend to attribute it to one government or another, not to stand idly by, and to understand once and for all that we are in an ongoing war, which is constantly shedding one form and taking on another, according to changing conditions. The manifestations of that war translate into mass disturbances, the use of knives and axes, throwing rocks, and placing explosive charges in all the sectors.

The IDF (Israel Defense Forces) and the security branches have not changed in the last four months. Their battle readiness has not diminished nor has the resourcefulness that characterizes them disappeared. They have fought, are fighting, and will fight to their best of their ability against all of these manifestations of terror and war. But at the same time, we must not let up even for a moment on the front of the peace negotiations. Will the alternative of political deadlock bring an end to the terror? Will it stop the killing? The opposite is true. Deadlock will deepen the feeling of frustration, which will cause intensification of the acts of hostility that could drag us into another war.

The only way is to continue this war on all the fronts, and to suit the military and political measures to the actions of the enemy and the surroundings he works in. And at the same time—to continue the main struggle for peace, which means continuing the attempt to find a political solution in stages, while preserving Israel's vital security interests.

Our fighters' resolve, and their success in facing the difficult challenges lying ahead, depend on their knowing that the government of Israel is doing everything it can at the negotiating table.

Violence 'Serves' Talks

93AE0091C Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew
29 Oct 92 p 23

[Editorial by 'Uri 'Elitzur]

[Text] I want to question the validity of the almost sacred axiom that the terrorist acts and sabotage are being carried out with the aim of torpedoing the peace talks. And despite the fact that the basic cliches of the "sane" camp in Israel generally enjoy immunity from critical thought, still, I want to deviate from sanity and accepted conventions, and stand this cliché before the test of reason.

It is easy to understand the intellectual poverty that leads to the cliché. Reality goes against all the sane promises we have made ourselves. Everything is the opposite: Yitzhak Shamir's government of deadlock and intractability and settlements succeeded in bringing a respite, while the government of great hope that reaches out to the Arabs, that has breathed the breath of life into the peace process, opened the prisons, and frozen the settlements, is precisely the one that has run up against this wave of hostility and violence.

Most of the spokesmen for the peace camp recognize by now that something has gone wrong, and that is why they hold on so hard to our cliché: the sabotage and violence are being done with the aim of torpedoing the peace talks, and that is why they worsen the more the peace process progresses; that is the only explanation for what is happening.

But I have always been wary of one-and-only explanations, knowing that intellectual poverty usually leads to mistaken conclusions; so I want to examine this conclusion without pressure, just through logic. Is it true that the aim of the sabotage and terrorist acts is to torpedo the peace talks?

Let us imagine that from afar, I see my vegetarian neighbor going into a butcher's shop. Theoretically, I could express the opinion that he went there to buy lettuce. Perhaps he is not so bright, and does not know that they do not sell lettuce in a butcher's shop. If the man does the same thing the next day, it is still possible to imagine that he is not convinced there is no lettuce there, and he is trying his luck again. The dope! What can you do? But if the man goes into the butcher's shop every day, and after twenty times I still imagine he is going there to buy lettuce, then he is not the dope in the story—I am.

Since the talks began in Madrid, there have been hundreds of sabotage attacks and acts of violence, and not one has torpedoed the talks or slowed them down by a single day. On the contrary, the Israeli response, both of the Shamir government and the Rabin government, has always been the same as it was this week: it is forbidden to play into their hands. We must fight terror and at the same time continue the peace talks; we must even accelerate them. Arik Sharon and Ya'el Dayan have suggested, each separately, making a symbolic break of a day or a week, but this was a symbolic suggestion, always meant only for the press, not to actually be carried out. The sharpest response that actually was carried out, was a protest break of 45 minutes.

If sabotaging the talks is really the only reason, or even just the main reason, for the terrorist acts, the attacks would have ended long ago, simply because they are not achieving their goal.

Besides that, if the terrorists' intention was to torpedo the peace talks, they would be shooting at Han'an 'Ashr'awi and Faisal Huseyni, not at anonymous Jewish passersby. That would be much more effective, much

easier from the operational point of view, and also very acceptable in the Arab world from a moral point of view.

We have come to the conclusion, then, that the attacks are not being carried out with the intention of torpedoing the peace talks. On the other hand, we can not let ourselves dismiss this with the opposite superficial thought, that this is murder for the sake of murder and terror for the sake of terror, with no connection to the talks in Washington, and no political aim. Because then we are back to the first question: the fact is that the terror rises when talks are going on and sinks when the political process bogs down.

The solution to the puzzle is very simple. The Arabs work with us using the good policeman-bad policeman method. Those carrying on the negotiations in Washington need terrorist attacks in the background. Their goal is not to torpedo the talks, but rather the opposite. The attacks and terror are a political negotiating tool. They are meant to put us under pressure and help their delegations achieve the best results in the negotiations.

Concerning a large segment of the attacks, I am convinced that completely knowingly, and in complete mutual awareness and agreement, they are carrying on the two processes together—both the talks and the murders, in the belief that the murders are helping the talks. With another part of the attacks it is not as explicit, but here too, there is an unconscious cooperation between those forces interested in political negotiations but also interested in there being those who angrily oppose them, and those forces opposing the negotiations but also interested in there being others who do participate in them.

Response to Increased Violence Viewed

93AE0074A Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew
20 Oct 92 p 23

[Article by Brigadier General Shayke Erez: "Precisely the Chances for Peace Necessitate Acting in the Intifadah as in War"]

[Text] Almost a year has passed since the festive opening of the negotiations between us and the Palestinians in Madrid. During that period no breakthrough has yet been achieved in understanding between the two sides.

About five years have passed since the outbreak of the intifadah, which waxes and wanes periodically. At the same time that the peace talks began, there was a certain diminution in the intensity of the violence in the field. Disturbances and acts of terror and murder renewed again in the last month, exacting a terrible bloody toll. The murder of Jews in moshavim in the 'Afula area, in a moshav in the Gaza area, on the roads in Judaea and Samaria; the murder of collaborators in the Jenin area. An Israeli citizen was attacked in Jerusalem (Jebel Mukhaber) with stones and an incendiary bottle in broad daylight and in front of television cameras, and only his composure, skill in weapons handling, and the speedy

assistance of the Border Police prevented a tragedy. The funeral of a prisoner who had died of a heart attack, which was held in Jerusalem during the day with police permission, became a photographed demonstration of strength, with the participation in uniform of some of the inciters of the disturbances, with faces masked and armed with axes, and with PLO and Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] flags, and even the Iraqi flag, waving in the wind.

This renewed outbreak of violence stems from the combination of several motives: it includes an expression of disillusionment and disappointment at the lack of significant movement in talks that have continued already about one year—disappointment that strengthens the Islamic bloc and the refusal fronts, which are intensifying their violent opposition to the peace process. The identification with the prisoners' hunger strike that united the entire population and bridged the ideological differences within it drew masses into the circle of violence.

These events will become worse if not checked soon with a firm hand, and the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] has experience in such a confrontation. The means that it has used have already proved in the past that it is able to halt the dynamics of the events, and the residents of the regions of Jenin, Harbata, and Khan Yunis understand this well. But now the feeling is that such activity will influence the atmosphere around the conference table, thus the avoidance of the use of full force.

It was already clear before the diplomatic process began that with progress in the negotiations, power struggles would erupt that would be expressed in a worsening of the violence, among other reasons in order to exert pressure on the sides—by means of the European countries, the United States, and circles in Israel—so as to improve the achievements of the Palestinians in the talks.

The maintenance of public order in Judaea and Samaria and the prevention of hostile acts and terrorism by the use of massive force do not necessarily constitute a blow to the peace process. In my opinion, terror and violence must be handled as in war, with everything that this implies, as if there were no ongoing diplomatic process, and the diplomatic process should be conducted without being influenced by the violence in the field.

For 25 years of military government in Judaea and Samaria, there was a directive for the IDF: to maintain quiet in the territories in order to allow the political level to make decisions without pressure. Precisely in this period of chances for peace, the IDF and the Shabak [General Security Service] must use all their resources so that there will be peace in Judaea and Samaria and so that the government will be able to make decisions without pressure from Palestinian murderers or Jewish rioters.

Reasons Not To Meet With 'Arafat Explained

93AE0092B Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew
29 Oct 92 p 23

[Article by S. Erez]

[Text] In the last elections in Israel, a coalition was assembled that is willing, without delay, to reach agreements with the Palestinians, and the heads of the Israeli teams conducting the negotiations were supposed to make an effort to advance the process. In contrast, the Palestinian delegation is being silenced because of conflicts of interest in the public that it represents and in the absence of a recognized leadership willing to make decisions and take upon itself the risks that the political process presents, whose acceleration, at this moment, is in the hands of the Palestinians.

The differences of opinion start within the Palestinian Liberation Organization. During a year of the existence of the talks, opposition to the negotiations grew within this organization, which are represented by the fronts of resistance, opposite the Fatah, which supports it. Those opposed to the PLO, primarily Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, increased terrorist activity in this period, serving the internal quarrels in the field, and this threat is confounding the work of the delegation. Another factor hurting the delegation's maneuverability is its complete dependence on 'Arafat: its members are guided before every meeting by the organization in Jordan and Tunisia, and in its course in the United States, by Nabil Sha'at, 'Arafat's political adviser.

The lack of Palestinian achievements in the negotiations constantly gnaws at the standing of the members of the delegation among the Palestinian public in Judaea, Samaria, and Gaza, and reveals their lack of leadership and continual avoidance of accepting the obligatory decisions from the talks. The positions of the PLO and the delegation are unacceptable to a portion of the Palestinian public that believes that the PLO's opposition to autonomy in the early '80's (the Camp David accords) made possible the continuation of the Israeli conquest in the territories. These people fear that this situation will repeat itself if a parting of the ways in the process is not achieved.

It is, therefore, not surprising that, with limitations such as these, the Palestinian delegation cannot properly advance in the discussion of the issues now coming of age. These include the PLO demands for the application of UN resolution 242 on the intermediate period, as well, for the Israeli obligation to establish a Palestinian state at the end of this period, as well as other issues—the status of the autonomy council, the status of Jerusalem and the Israeli settlements in Judaea, Samaria, and Gaza, and the departure of the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] from the territories and along the lines of confrontation—which have not yet come up in discussion.

'Arafat's proposal to meet with the prime minister of Israel was intended for publicity purposes alone. Such a

meeting cannot accelerate the rate of the talks, since 'Arafat is not free to decide by himself, and is under constant pressure from those opposed to the process in the PLO. For, if not, he would advise the delegation to advance the negotiations—which is not in his power to do.

Therefore, Israeli gestures, in this phase, will not advance the process. Israel now is in need of patience, which is a foundation of negotiations; it must advance in negotiations in accordance with its achievements and not according to a timetable fixed in advance.

Perhaps this is the moment to initiate early and discreet preparatory talks with the local Palestinian leadership, with a goal of analyzing the situation in which the process has been hurled, in an attempt to prevent further a souring of the chance for understanding, as has occurred in the past, with everything that has been understood from it.

Palestinian Right of Return Disputed

*93AE0140B Tel Aviv YEDIO'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew
16 Nov 92 p 23*

[Article by Shlomo Gazit: "To Whom If Not the PLO Will We Say: There Is Not Now and Will Not Be, a Right of Return"]

[Text] The announcement that Muhamad Halaj, a member of the PLO's Palestine National Council, was no longer a member (until further notice) was enough to end the minicrisis that broke out on the eve of the discussions of the International Committee on Refugee Matters in Ottawa. The "worm" had been purified and the Committee, with the blessing of Jerusalem, met in full session.

Under the conditions that had been created, all of them our own doing, we really had no choice but to act as we did. After we set the condition that we would not sit in the same room with a certified member of the PLO organization, and after we were assured that the Palestinian representation to the Committee in fact would not contain a PLO person, a demonstration of good faith was required when the promise was not kept.

Nevertheless since this is but one link in a long chain of meetings, conferences, and discussions, there is room to reflect on the fundamental wisdom of this Israeli policy.

Even though the law forbidding meetings with PLO people has not yet been changed, even now there is no prohibition on participation in this sort of meeting. The law permits such meetings for Israeli government representatives in the framework of the job levied upon them.

But the basic question is not legal, but, rather, what is the political sense of setting up the condition in the first place. Why does a government headed by the Labor party stick to the stubborn, wrongheaded Likud position?

It is vital to discuss the question of the Palestinian refugees, one of the central issues in the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab conflict, and it is vital to find a solution to it. Any solution or agreement reached between Israel and any of the Arab bodies without a solution to the refugee problem will leave us in the position we have been in since 1948. Furthermore, any concession made by Israel in the framework of such a limited bilateral agreement would be wasted.

When we go to discuss the question of the refugees, there is no point in doing so with the Arabs of the territories we hold. They do not represent the refugees in the diaspora, and they even have different and opposite interests. Discussion with them will not advance a solution. Is anyone really so naive as to think that a diaspora Palestinian who is not a member of the PLO establishment would not raise, as the first item on the agenda, the Palestinian demand for the "right of return?"

Finally, how can you explain the Israeli refusal to discuss the right of return? Does anyone really believe that raising the item on the agenda and Israeli willingness to discuss it are equivalent to Israeli concession and acquiescence? It is certainly possible to say just the opposite. There is no prospect of relieving the Palestinian pressure on the question of that "right" as long as we have not discussed it entirely candidly, as long as we have not made it clear to the Palestinians, to the Arab states and to the entire world that there is an absolute Israeli consensus on this issue, that there is no hope for a real and full solution to the conflict until the Palestinians reconcile themselves to reality: There is not and will not be a Palestinian return to Israeli territory. They have no choice but to rehabilitate themselves within the confines of the Arab states; and the sooner they hear that, understand it and despair of that vain hope, the better it will be, first of all, for them, the refugees themselves.

If we do not tell them, who do we expect will?

Peres Demands Reporting From Bonn on Neo-Nazism

*TA02120941 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 2 Dec 92
p 1*

[Excerpt] Foreign Minister Shim'on Peres has directed the Israeli ambassador to Bonn, Benny Navon, to demand that the German Government report routinely to the embassy all the avenues pursued by it against neo-Nazi anti-Semitic organizations.

The ambassador was further charged to personally relay to German heads of government the statement of the government of two days ago, which condemns neo-Nazi activity against foreigners and against Jews, which includes a demand that Bonn address the issue with the full severity of the law.

Ambassador Navon said that Jerusalem is interested in continuing the dialogue with Germany. He emphasized that Israel is well aware that the majority of the German

people supports democracy and that the neo-Nazi groups are a marginal phenomenon. At the same time, he added, Israel expects Germany to act decisively, to put an end to anti-Semitic manifestations and violence against foreigners.

An internal discussion was held yesterday at the foreign ministry and the ministry considered steps to raise to the cabinet, if Bonn does not act against the extreme right-wing organizations, or does not succeed in halting their activities. Among others, the following possibilities were raised:

- Peres will summon the German ambassador to Israel and relay Israel's strong protest to him.
- The Israeli ambassador to Bonn be recalled to Israel for 48 hours for a report or a consultation.
- The ambassador be recalled for a longer period, with the aim of expressing Israel's protest more forcefully.

In consultation it was decided that at this stage—after the German Government announced its outlawing of neo-Nazi organizations and there are signs that it is cracking down on them more strenuously—the government's announcement and a demand for ongoing reports is sufficient. [passage omitted]

Rabin on Syria, IDF, Judea, Samaria

93AE0029A Tel Aviv BAMAHAHE in Hebrew
23 Sep 92 pp 6-9, 11

[Interview with Prime Minister Rabin, by Lieutenant Colonel Or-Li Lahat, Yoav Kaspi, and Yanki Galanti; "It Is Hard To Imagine A Civil War"; place and date not given]

[Text] Yitzhaq Rabin says that in the next six months to a year, he will utilize every possible way to reach a solution on either the Syrian or Palestinian front. In his words, the intifadah is not dead, and it will be very hard for the leaders of the West Bank.

[BAMAHAHE] Mr. Prime Minister, one accepted theory is that compromises and peace agreements can only be brought about by leaders who are on the Right. There are examples in history, like DeGaulle in France; Reagan, who furthered relations with the former Soviet Union; Nixon in China; and, of course, Begin in Egypt. Do you accept that theory?

[Rabin] I cannot deny the facts you mentioned, although there are also examples of the opposite: for instance, the India-China dispute, which was solved by a socialist Prime Minister of France. There is a certain degree of truth in the theory, though, because the Right always tends to oppose compromise. If we take the Israeli precedent, the peace treaty with Egypt was achieved not through compromise, but rather through the wholesale handing over of everything we won from Egypt in the Six Day War. Out of all the territories conquered in the Six Day War: Sinai, the Gaza strip, the West Bank, the Golan Heights—80 to 85 percent of the territory was

returned, to the last grain of Egyptian sand. Can this be called a "compromise?" Of course not. There is no question that this precedent, especially the framework of the Camp David accords, which determines that the peace agreement with Egypt is the precedent for peace with other countries, makes things very difficult. As a Labor party member who does not want to repeat the precedent, it is precisely that agreement the Israeli Right made, which says that in exchange for peace you return everything, that is making it difficult for me.

[BAMAHAHE] It seems that now that the first euphoria of the talks with Syria is over, there is a crisis. Is it just a passing crisis?

[Rabin] I was never overcome by euphoria, and you have not heard, nor will you hear, expressions of euphoria from me. What happened was that, for the first time, Syria publicly declared that she was ready for peace. The fact that this is still not peace according to my conception of it—was known all the time. Beyond that: the first time Hafiz al-Asad was quoted in the media as having spoken explicitly of the need to reach peace with Israel was in his talk with the Druze leaders from the Golan Heights—some of whom carry Israeli passports. Since this is unprecedented, I think that it represents progress. But, it is still not a breakthrough and the reason is, of course, that when President al-Asad says "peace," he does not mean by "peace" what I would call a political settlement. When I say peace, I mean open borders, diplomatic relations, embassies—normalization of relations. By normalization, I do not mean that suddenly the people of Israel will love the people of Syria, and certainly not that the people of Syria will love Israel. Someone looking for love should not search for her in international relations. That is the worst address to come to if love is what you are looking for.

Peace with Syria must stand on its own on a bilateral basis, not influenced or conditioned by what has been achieved, or what will or will not be achieved, in other arenas of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

[BAMAHAHE] Do you agree with the Foreign Minister's definition, that developments in the negotiations with Syria are almost sensational?

[Rabin] I have not used expressions like that.

[BAMAHAHE] Can this true peace be achieved without giving up all of the Golan Heights?

[Rabin] Right now I cannot answer that. The Syrian position is well-known, and my instructions to the Israeli delegation to the talks with Syria in Washington are simple: beyond establishing the principle that resolutions 242 and 338 are applicable, the goal is not to solve the problem of the Golan Heights. The goal is to achieve full peace between Syria and Israel. What this principle implies is not just "peace for peace," but rather also a certain territorial price. My instructions are that as long as Syria is not ready to agree to our interpretation of the

essence of peace, and to the fact that it must stand on its own, we do not enter into territorial negotiations and do not draw maps.

[BAMAHANE] Do you perceive a change in al-Asad's policy? When he talks about "the peace of the bold"? He has actually been using this expression in interviews for 13 or 14 years, and when he says "the bold," he means the side that will be doing the conceding.

[Rabin] I do not want to get involved in interpreting al-Asad's words. I do not remember him talking about peace in the terms he used before the Druze delegation, or saying the kind of things they are saying today in Syria. But, as I said, I do see this as progress. Progress that stems from al-Asad's recognition of the fact that there has been a change in the international arena. The Soviet Union's disappearance from the scene, its division and disintegration; the end of the Cold War; the United States being the only superpower; the Persian Gulf crisis; the results of the Gulf War, which removed Iraq as a power that could support Syria militarily in an Arab-Israeli war—all these things led him to change. In my opinion, to a change that is still not enough.

[BAMAHANE] Then why not go ahead and clarify what we are ready for from the territorial point of view?

[Rabin] I do not think it would be wise to enter territorial negotiations before we know what kind of peace they are talking about. I do not deny the possibility that al-Asad might have the opposite considerations from mine. Perhaps he is also thinking: "Why should I say 'full peace,' before I know that I am receiving the territorial price I want." I admit that he is standing before a difficult dilemma. Why? Because an Israeli Government created a precedent—the agreement with Egypt, according to which, you return everything in return for peace. This is what, more than anything else, makes it difficult to reach peace with Syria.

[BAMAHANE] Let us go on, with your permission, to the subject of the Palestinians. Before the elections, you spoke of autonomy within six to nine months. Is this timing still realistic, or, in the wake of the developments with the Syrians, has the Palestinian side been put off—perhaps even intentionally?

[Rabin] Since the government I lead took over the negotiations, there have been two rounds. We are in the middle of the second one now. I believe that within six months to a year we will reach something definite. I very much hope there will be an agreement, but this is the time in which there are all the possibilities to reach a solution. Whether this will be on the Syrian front, or on the Palestinian front—is hard for me to say today.

When I was Defense Minister in the National Unity Government at the end of 1988, and especially at the beginning of 1989, there was a different pattern for the peace process. I thought that we should go ahead with the first stage with the Palestinians, with the help of the Egyptians. Anyone who examines the history of the

relations between the Arab states and Israel since the War of Independence will find one thing: in an international conference we did not reach agreements. Only when we talked with a single Arab partner in a set time frame, and with that partner alone, did we reach an agreement. Even if this was a limited agreement like the cease fire. Sitting before you is a man who was a member of the first negotiating team between the State of Israel, then not yet a year old, and Egypt, in Rhodes in 1949. In February and March of 1949, we reached an agreement. When we finished working with the Egyptians, we sat down with the Jordanians. For the negotiations with the Syrians, we did not have to travel to Rhodes. We had one meeting on the Israeli side, at Rosh Pina, and the second meeting in the Syrian Customs House—which was Syrian territory then, on the Golan Heights. The talks with Lebanon were held in Na'kora. So you see, even in those days, we did not have to hold our meetings far from the region.

After this came 25 years of drought. The Sinai Campaign and the Six-Day War did not end in agreements. Only after the Yom Kippur War was there a return to agreement-making. We signed the disengagement agreement with Egypt and later, began negotiations with Syria. Later, there was an interim agreement on Sinai, then Camp David, then the peace settlement. Since 1979, no agreement has been signed except the abortive one of May 17th, 1983—the peace agreement with Lebanon—that died even before the signers' ink was dry.

The Madrid Conference is the model for an international conference. Actually this model makes things a bit difficult, because the Arab factors, the three delegations—Jordanian-Palestinians, Syrians, and Lebanese—come together: at the same time, to the same place. This situation creates links that are dangerous, and so this model is not ideal. The model was created under Israeli pressure, and I inherited it. I have no doubt that the model of 1989-1990 would make it easier to reach agreements. In today's model, there is the danger of too strong a link between the Arab factors, and so we are insisting that each set of negotiations stand on its own.

[BAMAHANE] Yesterday, in an interview in the territories, one of the officers said to us: "There is no one to turn the autonomy over to. There will be a second Bosnia here. They will devour each other. In the elections, too, if they occur, you do not know that Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] will not suddenly win in Gaza." Is there someone to turn the autonomy over to?

[Rabin] That point is correct, and it is troubling. In Syria there is a master of the house—it is a state with someone who rules over it, who makes decisions, and can decide anything he wishes. He has no coalition problems, no problems with a kneset or parliament. He decides, and that is that. When we talk about the Palestinians, the case is totally different. There is no clear address—there are the leaders of the residents of the territories, who are also arguing among themselves. There are among them, many who are more pragmatic, much more serious than

the group which sits in Tunis led by 'Arafat. The leaders from the territories understand us more than others do. They know what can and cannot be achieved, they also know what it means to be responsible for the lives of a population of 1.7 million people, to feed it, keep it healthy, educate it, the problems of the municipalities. But the tragedy of the Palestinians is that their leaders for the last 50 years—from the Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj' 'Amin 'Al-Husayni, to 'Ahmad Sukayri, to 'Arafat—strove to achieve it all, and were left with nothing. I think that for the leaders of the residents of the territories it would also be very difficult to return, after almost five years of the intifadah, with empty hands, without the beginning of something. But without clear, authoritative leadership; as long as the [Palestinians] are divided; as long as Tunisia does not help, rather the opposite—there are obstacles that make real progress in the Palestinian arena difficult; and therefore, the negotiations with Syria seem more promising.

[BAMAHANE] Lately, some have been saying that the intifadah is, to all extents, dead?

[Rabin] I am not one of those who think the intifadah is dead. It still survives, though on another level of violence, through strengthening the element of terror in it. In the first three and a half years there were more disturbances of the peace, that is: stones, tires, strikes. By the way, the lack of serious leadership in the territories is expressed in the significant rise in murders among themselves. If I am not mistaken, since January 1, 1992, six or seven Palestinians have been killed in clashes with the IDF (Israel Defense Forces), while in exactly the same period, 54 Palestinians were murdered by other Palestinians. This reflects the extent of Palestinian apprehension. You mentioned that someone warned of a situation like Bosnia in the territories. This is not the same, because in Bosnia the battles are between Serbs, Bosnians, Muslims, and Croats. There is mutual support and a feeling of unity within each ethnic group. Here, there is an internal war within the ethnic group we call Palestinians.

[BAMAHANE] Do you see a possibility of a civil war on the background of an attempt to return the territories. Would you be ready to bring the question of giving up the territories to a referendum?

[Rabin] It is hard for me to imagine the possibility of a civil war. There may be sharp expressions of opposition here and there. Here too I went through a trauma like this once before. I commanded a Palmah [Striking Force of the Hagannah] unit against the attempt by the Irgun to bring in weapons—the Altalena incident. That was traumatic for me, and to this day I am sure that it is possible to avoid that.

[BAMAHANE] What happened in Yamit with a handful of people could be repeated in the territories in a much worse way. Also because of the fact that there are tremendous numbers of weapons there.

[Rabin] I see the problem of Judah and Samaria—religious, historic, actual—as much more sensitive; Gaza as less sensitive. I would order this way: Judah, Samaria, the Golan Heights, Gaza. Right now, there is no political plan for Judah, Samaria, and Gaza, except autonomy, or they call it in negotiation terminology—interim self-government arrangement, which means, in effect, an interim arrangement for Palestinian self-rule for a transitional period, with military-security control by the IDF continuing in all the territories. For at least the first five years after the interim arrangement for the transition period is set up, there is no territorial concession here. The territorial problem that is likely to be dealt with today, to a greater or lesser extent, is the one in the Golan Heights, if Syria agrees to a complete peace that can stand on its own two feet.

[BAMAHANE] You are describing a situation in the territories where decisions are being postponed while the earthquake is exploding.

[Rabin] I do not want to hope for anything like that. I am one of those who do not want to annex 1.7 million Palestinians as citizens of the State of Israel. So, I am against what is called the Whole Land of Israel. I believe in the right of the Jewish people to the entire Land of Israel, for without recognition of this right I have no explanation of why a Jewish state must be here and only here. But under the existing circumstances, if the choice is between a binational or a Jewish state, I prefer a Jewish state. Implementing sovereignty over all of the mandatory Land of Israel would mean that we would have 2.7 million Palestinians as citizens of the State of Israel. This would perhaps be a Jewish state according to name, but binational in content, demography, and democracy. So I am against annexation, and, to the same extent, I think that the important thing is to start with autonomy, with an interim agreement. If it develops as it should, possibilities of federation will open up between us and them, because their economic links are to a great extent with us. The agreement will also answer the security problems, as well as the right of a Jew to settle anywhere [in the land]. There will be a division which will give expression to their separate identity, but not necessarily an independent state.

[BAMAHANE] And what about a referendum on concessions?

[Rabin] I see no reason right now to set up a referendum. There has never been a referendum until now in the State of Israel. There is no legislation for a referendum. The negative side of a referendum is that it creates a situation where the government has to resign. It is better to have elections than a referendum. I do not see the need to have elections, because we ran with a clear message, we did not deceive anyone despite what the residents of the Golan Heights say. We said that if peace in the Golan could be achieved, we would not necessarily be glued to the present border.

[BAMAHANE] During the elections, you did not speak of accepting 242.

[Rabin] Why not? In the resolutions of the Labor Party committee, it is clearly stated: The resolutions in 242 are applicable to a peaceful solution on all fronts. The Likud Government also accepted the idea that the basis for the peace process is resolutions 242 and 338, and on this basis the agreement with the Egyptians was signed.

[BAMAHANE] At the same time the peace talks are going on, an unconventional threat from neighbors further away—like Iran, Libya, and Algeria—is appearing. The estimation is that by the end of the decade, at least one of these states will achieve operational nuclear capability. What steps is Israel taking in the face of this problem?

[Rabin] First of all, let us look at the picture as it actually is. Among all the countries you mentioned—the Arab countries and Iran—the most advanced in the nuclear field is Iraq. From a certain point of view, a miracle has occurred: the fact that Iraq woke up one fine day, invaded Kuwait, conquered and annexed her, and the second fact, that in the United States a President arose, President Bush, who stood up as the Iraqis and many others never expected; and a war took place in the Gulf. Though the Americans did not go to war because of Israel, Israel was, except for Kuwait, the one that enjoyed the most benefits from the results of the war. When I say “enjoyed,” that is in quotes, for we were also hit by scuds.

There are two threats to the security of the State of Israel: the threat to our actual existence, which has not been eliminated, is the most serious threat. It could be expressed by an army or armies of the Arab states. Today this threat is much more serious, both because of the existence of ground-to-ground missiles in the Arab states, and because of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of Syria and Iraq. Other states have chemical and biological weapons, but no nation has nuclear weapons yet.

The second threat is the threat that is a nonstop, constantly painful part of everyday life: terror. The terror from Lebanon, Palestinian terror, Shiite terror, the intifadah.... These are not threats to the actual survival of the State of Israel. A person who does not understand this distinction between the different kinds of threats, and does not know, as a result, how to crystalize a general policy for Israel, can only fall into classic mistakes, like the war in Lebanon.

In the war against Iraq, the miracle that happened to us was that our intelligence and American intelligence discovered that Iraq was three or four years away from achieving atomic weapons. This time they did it in such a way that the Israeli air force would not be able to destroy the Iraqi nuclear program by an attack on one target, or five. Therefore, the uncovering the matter, and the existence of U.N. teams supported by the threat of American power, the continuity of their operations for

another year or two, will enable us will help us to protect against the Iraqi threat in the long run.

When the supervision ends, Iraq will be freer and, within about five years, will be back to a situation where she can reach nuclear capability before any of the countries you mentioned.

What does this mean for Israel? Today, Israel alone cannot definitely prevent the efforts, whether in Algeria, Iran, or Iraq, and this is why relations with the United States are so important. The United States, whose capability is greater today because she is the only superpower in the international arena, can delay and perhaps prevent [proliferation]—but this is also not certain.

The second thing that can be deduced is in the political realm. I predict that the window will stay open for, perhaps, five years. If we do not succeed in furthering peace in the next five to seven years, at least with the states bordering Israel, the processes in Arab countries further away, and in the Muslim states like Iran, are likely to develop in the way you suggested, for we are in an arms race.

The Arab world is chasing after ground-to-ground missiles with the feeling that it has discovered a weak spot that Israel can not address, and they know that in another five or seven years there will be no answer. There is no interception for ground-to-ground missiles at a medium range of 300 to 1,200 kilometers. Similarly, the Arab world is chasing after weapons of mass destruction. And so, from the viewpoint of seeking the optimum security for Israel—where we see the main problem as the threat to Israel's actual survival—if we do not reach the periphery of peace, the danger to Israel will grow. Israel will stand up to whatever may happen, but we must remember that in a conventional war in the next five to seven years, the rear and the front will both be under fire.

[BAMAHANE] There is an approach—its main exponent is 'Aharon Yariv—which supports revealing Israel's nonconventional capability, if it does in fact exist.

[Rabin] I think that the Israeli policy, whose main point is that we will not be the first to introduce nuclear arms to the area, but to the same extent will avoid a situation where somebody else introduces them before us, is the right one. It would not be wise to say more than that.

[BAMAHANE] Is the Ministry of Defense not handicapped in its everyday functioning by the fact that it is not headed by a full-time minister?

[Rabin] It is natural to say that if there is a full-time defense minister, he can do more than a prime minister who is also minister of defense. But there have been precedents, and not unsuccessful ones, where the prime minister was also defense minister. I am referring to Ben Gurion—the entire time he served; Eshkol, until 1967; and Begin, for one year. I decided on this because I thought that in the first stage of negotiations, especially

in the Palestinian round, there must be very close coordination between the diplomatic process and what is happening in the territories, that leaders at the diplomatic level must have direct control over what is done in the territories. That is the way I see it.

I also think that, concerning the negotiations with the Syrians, it is important for the security element and the bilateral talks to be handled by me directly, in consultation with, and respecting the decisions of, the government, and in consultation with the foreign minister, but the connection should be direct-between me and the heads of the delegations. That means at this stage, and I hope and believe, that within a year, or between six months to a year, we will reach agreements, but this will be the stage of utilizing, or not utilizing, to the fullest, all the possibilities with regard to the three delegations we are negotiating with.

[BAMAHANE] When you took over the post, you declared that the defense budget would not be cut. And now, not only has there been a cut, but for the first time since they announced the multiyear plan, development and supplies are being affected, too. How does this fit into the picture, considering the progress the states on the periphery are making in the realms of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction?

[Rabin] The aim of most of the defense budget is building up the IDF in the face of the present threat. The actual threat in the next two to five years is small, because of two events that were not dependent on us: the change in the international order, and the Gulf War. These two things lessened the threat to the existence of Israel in a real way, though they have not eliminated the threat.

On the other hand, I do think that strengthening the economic and social framework is the condition for absorbing the immigrants who have arrived and have not been absorbed. Here is hidden the hope of enlarging the number of Jews. Since her founding, there have been two great waves of immigration to Israel. The greatest in absolute terms, but certainly not in relative terms, was at the end of the 1940's and the beginning of the 1950's, when in five years the Jewish population grew more than 100 percent, from 600,000 in 1948, to about 1,300,000 in 1953. History has shown that the decision made by Ben Gurion then, to absorb a number so large, was correct, in spite of the fact that the Labor party is still paying for it to this day. Without it, we would have remained a State of Israel without Jews. The second opportunity for a great wave of immigration is happening now. Already, 400,000 have arrived, and it is possible that it will reach a million. I do not know if this opportunity will last more than a year, or perhaps two or three. And in my eyes, it is more important today than anything else: of course, without neglecting existing areas of concern. And so, I have changed the order of priorities.

[BAMAHANE] You came into the elections with the slogan of changing the order of priorities. How does this fit in with the continued construction, nearing a record, of 11,000 housing units in the territories?

[Rabin] Everything in life is relative. This 11,000 includes the Golan Heights, and the reason is simple: we canceled everything possible from what was supported by State budget or State guarantees, anything where only the foundations had been laid, or where even less work had been done. But I thought that to destroy what already had a frame and walls was not desirable for all kinds of reasons—including symbolic, for our neighbors.

[BAMAHANE] That is, there may be thousands more settlers in the coming years?

[Rabin] If they settle, they settle. We will not keep anyone from settling. We will not show preference. We will not create a situation where an apartment in Rosh Ha'ayin costs almost twice as much as one in 'Etz Efrayim, eight kilometers away. We will not keep up that absurdity.

[BAMAHANE] The first days of the new government were days of euphoria. The trip to Egypt, the guarantees from the United States, but in the last few weeks there is a certain feeling that we are back to the same old thing. This began with the large number of deputy ministers and continues with the unemployment, which is still breaking records, the sick fund crisis, etc., etc. Are you plural too, starting to lose touch with the people?

[Rabin] I do not think so. We did not create the sick fund crisis. A situation was created where the sick fund cares for 70 percent or more of the people, and it has begun to be mainly for the poor. Until the latest uniform rate hike, 70 percent of the members of the sick fund paid less than 70 shekels. Such a situation is absurd. In the first stage, we have to revitalize the sick fund, therefore we did not pour in money without a revitalization plan and without changing the board of directors and the management. We will also work to pass a national health insurance law, if the Knesset will let us. We are speaking of the right of every citizen to freely choose which sick fund he or she prefers to be in. We are working to improve the efficiency of the hospitalization system, with or without a central authority.

[BAMAHANE] In your speech before the command and staff officers, you criticized the overuse of the expressions "Have confidence," and "It will be all right," which are common in the army, but your generation used these expressions too. Who are you actually turning to with those complaints, and, in your opinion, has the quality of discipline in the IDF gone down compared to the time when you served as Chief of Staff?

[Rabin] There is a certain degree of carelessness and nonchalance in the Israeli atmosphere, which is especially noticeable in certain areas. If in some security action, 14 Israelis were killed in one week, the whole country would be up in arms. Yet today, almost every

week, between eight to 14 people are killed in traffic accidents. Is this fate? The things I said concern many areas of public life, habits that are not easy to uproot. This begins with the relationship of the student to his teacher in school. It also comes out in the way the members of the Knesset express themselves.

[Bamahane] What about the IDF?

[Rabin] Compared to my time in the army, the IDF has progressed; in the war against traffic accidents and the whole range of other accidents: training, weapons, mishaps in training, pushing the men so much they become dehydrated, or what is called "breaking legs." In certain periods, accidents were actually censored.

[Bamahane] Up to three years ago, it was forbidden to report accidents.

[Rabin] Reporting such accidents is a very painful disclosure. The day before yesterday, I had a talk with several division commanders. They said, "This puts pressure on us." Then, the degree of pressure also has to be supervised, but it is good. So, what I said to the division commanders, and have also said to the Minister of Defense: there is a difference between what happens in the civilian and in the military realm—A soldier in the IDF serves by force of law, something that demands that he show greater responsibility, not only to be prepared for a mission, but also to protect his own life during time of preparation for war, and during a war. Beyond that, the IDF has two other advantages: the hierarchy, which does not exist in civilian life, and the fact that what the soldier is doing is supported by broad national consensus.

[Bamahane] Ten years have passed since the battle at Sultan Ya'aqov, and three IDF soldiers have been missing ever since; six years have passed since Ron 'Arad was taken prisoner. Is there any word on this subject, and how are you, as Prime Minister, dealing with this painful problem?

[Rabin] There is no doubt that the most painful problem is that of the missing in action and the prisoners. It has always accompanied the State of Israel. In the past, wars between us and the Arab states ended with an exchange of prisoners. There was no cease-fire, with or without an agreement, that was not accompanied by an exchange of prisoners. There were also periods where our pilots—mainly pilots, but not exclusively—were in captivity for years. Most of the pilots from the war of attrition were freed after the Yom Kippur War. Where we are speaking of terror organizations, the problem is more complicated.

Actually, since 1968, the IDF has not taken military action to free soldiers or civilians captured by terrorist organizations outside the borders of Israel, except for one action in Entebbe. There was one case where the Syrians captured several officers. All the deals, from the El Al plane in Algeria, to the freeing of prisoners held by terror organizations, were exchange deals—prisoners

held in Israel exchanged for Israelis. I also, as Defense Minister, inherited this procedure, and I recommended the Jibril deal to the cabinet. When negotiations began, conditions were set, but as a principle I did not see myself as having the moral right to leave three IDF soldiers in the hands of a terror organization, after they had been sent by the State of Israel to wage war on terror. I wanted an IDF soldier—anyone who is captured or in danger of being captured—to know that the State will be behind them, even at a painful price.

If we reach the point of discovering the location of the missing from Sultan Ya'aqov, or of Ron 'Arad—Fink and 'Alsheikh's deaths have already been established—and if they are alive and it is possible to make an exchange for them, I will do that. Because I do not see myself as having a moral right to leave them where they are. The problem is that we are not finding an address ready to say to us: we are responsible, they are in our hands, they are alive or dead. This is one of the tragedies of the character of our enemies, whether this is the Palestinian terror organizations, whether it is the Hizballa, or the states that pull the strings behind their actions. We will continue to do everything we can, the best we can do. Wherever I appear, I say that I cannot talk about everything. I had a talk with the President of the United States, too. He also has received a difficult inheritance—They have 2,500 missing from the Vietnam War.

[Bamahane] To sum up, Mr. Prime Minister, would you like to send a New Years message to the soldiers of the IDF?

[Rabin] I want to bless all the soldiers of the IDF, on land, air, or sea, those in regular service, permanent service, reserves, and the members of the settlements on the confrontation lines, with a good year, and I hope we succeed in the coming year in achieving both peace and security. Security for the survival of the State, and also security for her citizens, who sometimes face the attack of terrorists and murderers.

Rabin Aide Sheves on Labor Party Politics, Role

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[Interview by Orit Galili with Shimon Sheves: "To a Certain Extent, They Are Even Trying to Spill My Blood"; place and date not given]

[Text] [Galili] When Hayim Bar-Lev spoke in the Knesset in 1983 about territorial compromise in the Golan Heights, you engaged in the mapping of a new settlement northeast of Ramat Magshimim.

[Sheves] This refers to the settlement Qidmat Zvi, which was established at that time, but not as a response to Hayim Bar-Lev's statement. It is true that I attacked what Bar-Lev said then, because there are statements that are made at the wrong time, and they cause harm,

particularly to morale. These people went to settle in this place as a mission of the state.

[Galili] Yitzhaq Rabin is now speaking of territories for peace. Are you on the other side of the fence?

[Sheves] No. I am the director general of the prime minister's office, and the policy of the Government of Israel is to make peace. I have always believed in the principles of the labor movement regarding peace. If I did not believe in them, I would be a member of another party.

[Galili] There is a variety of opinions in the Labor Party regarding the Golan Heights. Are you a hawk, as you are customarily categorized?

[Sheves] I do not employ the definitions hawk or dove. If my position—that the State of Israel must, when coming to make peace, maintain secure borders both on the Jordanian border and in the Golan Heights—is defined as a hawkish position, then I am a hawk.

In 1979, Shimon Sheves, then chairman of the Golan Heights settlements, led the residents' struggle that led to the petition that was submitted to Menahem Begin, who was then prime minister, in which it was written: "The Golan is an integral part of Israel, and Israel's sovereignty in the Golan is a guarantee of security and peace." The text of the petition caused an argument. The strict demanded a sweeping text—Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights.

But those who understood that one day it would be necessary to reach a peace agreement with Syria supported a more flexible definition: Israeli sovereignty in the Golan Heights, that will eventually facilitate territorial compromise according to the principles of United Nations resolutions 242 and 338. Sheves, upon consulting with Yi'gal Alon, Yisra'el Galili, Yitzhaq Rabin, and 'Omri Ron, was among the supporters of the flexible text. Therefore, he does not maintain that a change has taken place in his positions. "What do they think, that when I went up to the Golan Heights I did not want a peace agreement with the Syrians?" wondered the director general of the prime minister's office. "I wanted it then exactly like I want it today. I did not struggle then against the separation of forces and against the interim agreement. I was in favor of them. Peace with Syria is also a very important component of security."

[Galili] What is the red line, from your perspective? If all or most of the Golan Heights is returned, will you be able to continue to cooperate with the prime minister?

[Sheves] We will see when the time comes.

[Galili] Do you have an independent opinion, or do you accept the opinion of the prime minister on every matter?

[Sheves] Here and there, there are differences of opinion, but I truly admire him.

[Galili] When the people of the Golan Heights come, worried, to the prime minister, are you on their side or on Rabin's side?

[Sheves] When dealing in this realm, I am in a sensitive situation, because a great deal of my feelings are mixed up in it. And when there is human, social, or existential distress in the Golan Heights, that is not easy for me, but I have no intention of running away from responsibility or from an unpleasant situation. I believe in the way, and Israel has no alternative but to advance and to examine every possibility of reaching a peace agreement.

[Galili] What will you do if the settlers in the Golan Heights employ acts of protest—establish new settlements or oppose the evacuation violently?

[Sheves] In all cases, I am in favor of maintaining law and order, in favor of the rule and authority of the state—whatever the decision made.

[Galili] Is it possible that your friends in the Golan Heights refer to you as a traitor?

[Sheves] I do not think so. I am not far in my opinions from the members of the Labor Party in the kibbutzim and the moshavim and some of the people of Katzrin. I have a lot of friends in the Golan Heights, and I will continue to be their friend. I am troubled when they are troubled, but I do not speak with them about the peace process: it is clear to me and to them why the place where I am focuses all of the questions and fears upon it.

[Galili] Do they view you as their representative, who looks out for their interests?

[Sheves] They often come to me. Due to their sensitive situation and my delicate situation on this matter, I make sure to agree to every request for a meeting, including personal requests.

[Galili] Do you have more influence over Rabin than other people do regarding the Golan Heights?

[Sheves] No.

[Galili] There are those who claim that Rabin leads the government in a presidential style, that he acts alone and sends down orders.

[Sheves] In my opinion, this criticism is incorrect. It is true that Rabin is dominant and authoritative. But he does not manage the government on his own. Perhaps the critics became accustomed to a government in which there is a confederative element. And perhaps the new situation, in which the government has a central axis, and there is someone involved in every important and central thing, causes eyebrows to be raised. But I think that this is the way that it should be.

[Galili] When you say a government with an element of a central axis, do you mean Sheves?

[Sheves] I mean Yitzhaq Rabin. When I am a politician, I will speak and act on behalf of Shimon Sheves.

[Galili] But you established in the prime minister's office a headquarters that is termed the Sheves government.

[Sheves] I think that the definition is incorrect, and that is putting it mildly. I established a headquarters, that if its roles are carefully examined, people will be surprised how, to date, for 44 years, it was not established in the prime minister's office. There are several branches in the headquarters that are designed to serve the prime minister and the Government of Israel in achieving the objectives that we spoke about during the elections. One must remember why we won the election: because the public thought that Rabin was suited to head the government, and because the previous government, its people and positions, were out of touch with the people, its needs, and its problems. The headquarters is intended to aid the prime minister, so that he will be able to have his finger on the pulse at all times.

[Galili] There are no political figures in the headquarters that you established. Some claim that you are distancing all of the politicians from Rabin's environment, because of your political ambitions.

[Sheves] I appointed to the various positions people who had not been in public service; some of them are very interesting, with creative and expressive ability. This will be a creative headquarters that will help the prime minister to make contact with the establishment and with the citizens. I head this headquarters, and I will have a mechanism by means of which I will be able to be involved in things happening in other ministries.

[Galili] If so, the person in charge of this headquarters possesses considerable power.

[Sheves] It is likely that this is the source of the criticism of me, because people view the headquarters as a source of power that did not exist previously in the prime minister's office. I understand the fears, but I do not think that they are justified. For the entire government, ultimately, must express the policy determined by the prime minister in its daily activity, and if I and my team serve as a catalyzer to that end, that is not necessarily a negative thing. The fact is that the public at large understands this, and the amount of congratulations that we receive is proof of this.

[Galili] Why would a cabinet minister want you to be involved in the work of his ministry through your headquarters?

[Sheves] I do not see this as a conflict of interests. This is not a competition between industrial enterprises. This is one government, and not a confederation of ministries.

[Galili] You are described as a person who has let your job and power go to your head, who told one of the ministers "I made you a minister," and you ordered one minister not to come to or telephone another minister.

[Sheves] No minister was appointed by virtue of me and I have never said such a thing. I did not prejudice the

dignity of any of the cabinet ministers. I have excellent working relations with most of them.

[Galili] Are you familiar with the expression "power corrupts?"

[Sheves] I hope to keep away from that. The truth is that I still do not feel my power. I feel that I am in an important and central focus in the State of Israel and the people of Israel. I definitely have a lot of strength in the positive sense, in my desire to do and change things in the country. I hope that I will be able to utilize this right that has been granted me with wisdom.

[Galili] Why are there members of the party who are afraid of you, who express support for Yuval Frankel because they do not want to get into trouble with you?

[Sheves] There is no reason to be afraid of me, and I do not know why they are afraid. I do not believe that there are people who say one thing and later vote differently. Nobody has any reason to say something that he does not believe in and does not want. I do not know a single member of the central committee that I have embarrassed or intimidated in order to influence him to decide whom to support. Under my initiative, I have also stopped all party handling of appointments. For the past few weeks, attempts have been made to blacken my name and to put words in my mouth that I have not said and, to a certain extent, to spill my blood.

But I do not intend to fall into the net that elements in the party are trying to spread. They want me to be enticed into embarking upon street fights, but I will not do that, for the sake of the honor of the party, for the sake of the honor of the secretary general to be elected, and also for the sake of my own honor.

[Galili] Why are you an ardent supporter of Yuval Frankel?

[Sheves] Because he has behind him, and not many months ago, a tremendous success, that has not existed for almost 20 years in the party—the Labor party is ruling. He is one of a group of members who led the party to the changes that have taken place in it and led it to the great victory that occurred in the elections.

[Galili] One cannot recall a director general of the prime minister's office who has so frequently dealt in political affairs.

[Sheves] I am acting to the best of my ability to bring about the election of Frankel within the framework of what is allowed by the civil service regulations. Before I became director general of the prime minister's office, I was Rabin's assistant for eight years. I dealt in political party affairs, and it would be unnatural, and even funny, for the person who engaged in this for so many years together with Rabin to distance himself from the political realm.

[Galili] Why are we not hearing from Yitzhaq Rabin on the matter of the secretary general?

[Sheves] I know precisely who he is for, but regarding what he does or does not do on the matter—that you must ask him.

[Galili] It appears that the division in the current government has reversed in contrast with the previous government—the office director, Eytan Haber, is the political advisor, and the director general of the [prime minister's] office is the political advisor.

[Sheves] That is not true. There is a precise definition of the job of director general of the prime minister's office, and there is a precise definition of the job of office director. On many matters, we act together—in the state realm, the public realm, and the political realm, as well. It is impossible to make an artificial separation among these things.

[Galili] In a celebration held for you recently in Givatayim, the mayor, Yitzhaq Yaron, and Benyamin Ben Eliezer said that the director general of the prime minister's office is just the beginning of the road, and that they expect that you will be appointed minister in the next government.

[Sheves] They said those things because perhaps they hold me in esteem and expect things from me, but that was not coordinated with me. I do not work in time frames like that, and I am not thinking in terms of personal political advancement. I am acting only toward the fulfillment of the tasks in the prime minister's office, for the good of the prime minister. To a large extent, I am continuing to be the prime minister's assistant, and I am not ashamed of that.

[Galili] Out of all of Rabin's people, you are considered the person who least likes Shimon Peres.

[Sheves] That is another one of those things that are spread without checking it out.

[Galili] You do not say hello to each other.

[Sheves] Not true. We have always said hello, even during the most difficult times of tension. It is no secret that I have supported Rabin for many years, and that I maintain that Rabin is more suited and more worthy of heading the Government of Israel. That is a fact of life.

[Galili] And for years you have seen Peres as an obstacle in Rabin's path?

[Sheves] That is a fact, but not a personal problem. That is a party problem and a national problem. Peres has talents and ability, and he has definitely done important things; I preferred Yitzhaq Rabin, and the fact is that my preference was justified.

[Galili] How do you view the relations between Peres and Rabin in this government?

[Sheves] Correct working relations. They usually see things the same way. Sometimes, people try to create things around them that are groundless.

[Galili] And you are not one of them?

[Sheves] That is utter nonsense. It is not me who creates the camps. Regarding the secretary general, somebody has an interest in creating artificial camps in order to rally people around the flag of the camp, and that is not coming from me. The weak side usually hoists the camp flag, and therefore I am not being dragged into this confrontation. Since the establishment of the government, nobody has heard me say a bad word about Peres or about any of his people.

[Galili] Will Nissim Zvili be elected secretary general?

[Sheves] I would see this as a bad thing for the party. I would also view this as my personal failure if we do not realize the objectives for which we were elected to head the country.

[Galili] What do you think about the prime minister's statements: nonsense, let Gaza drown in the sea, the Fogels, etcetera?

[Sheves] I do not criticize the prime minister in public. I tell him when I do not agree with something. I feel free to tell Rabin everything that I think, on every matter and issue. Those who leak what the prime minister said in a closed meeting, even if he expressed himself severely, they are exacerbating matters.

[Galili] You do not support freedom of opinion and information?

[Sheves] I am in favor of freedom of opinion and information, but against freedom of leakage.

[Galili] Are you optimistic regarding peace?

[Sheves] Yes. First of all, because there is a political process.

[Galili] There was a political process during the Shamir government, too.

[Sheves] There was not anything. There is a difference between talking about a process and a process directed toward making peace.

Profile of Cabinet Secretary Candidate Ben-'Ami

93AE0118A Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew
6 Oct 92 pp 16, 17

[Article by Orli Azulay-Katz]

[Text] "My political temperament is what pushes me toward Jerusalem," says Professor Shlomo Ben-'Ami, former Israeli ambassador to Spain, and he adds that "my fingers are really itching to be a partner in the making of the government in such fascinating times, when we are at the gateway of the process for making peace on three fronts: Syria, Jordan, and the Palestinians."

He wants to emphasize that he is not one of those seeking a government job, but acknowledges that he has strong political ambitions.

These days, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin proposed to him that he serve as cabinet secretary, in place of Elyaqim Rubinstein. Ben-'Ami termed the proposal "very interesting," and emphasized that nothing yet had been settled between him and Rabin. The proposed position could constitute, when the time comes, a significant stepping-stone for one who intends to vie for a good position among the upper echelon.

Ben-'Ami, age 49, is aware of the relative advantage of the position, as well as the almost daily exposure in the media. Now the parties are trying to build the model for the position. In the corridors of the prime minister's bureau they are saying that Ben-'Ami wants to be secretary in the style of Dan Meridor: involved, familiar, and influential.

He is insisting that after every government meeting, he will be the one authorized to deliver announcements to the newspapers, so that the familiar scene will not recur where every minister runs up to the nearest microphone being held out to him and speaks without proper coordination. Ben-'Ami is also insisting that he be able to continue in his position as head of the refugee committee in the peace talks, a position that he was assigned to by Foreign Minister Shim'on Peres, who essentially "discovered" him, nurtured him, and gave him an opportunity for his first diplomatic experience when he pulled him away from the university and appointed him Israeli Ambassador to Spain.

In the prime minister's pocket rests a list of 11 people who are interested in the position of cabinet secretary. If there are no last minute changes, Ben-'Ami will be the winner, and he will be installed into the position in January.

While still ambassador to Spain, Ben-'Ami considered the possibility of running for a spot on the Labor Party Knesset slate. The move-up of the elections spoiled his plans. He understood that with the primaries system, it would be difficult to arrive and win the votes of Yeruham, for example. As a going-away present from the embassy in Spain he received the Madrid conference and, later, left for a sabbatical year in Washington, DC, not before trying to become involved in the election system.

One of Rabin's associates suggested that he stand at the head of the propaganda staff. Ben-'Ami complied but, in the end, Rabin decided differently. Ben-'Ami: "I talked with Rabin a number of times and he explained to me, very correctly, that he could not appoint me as the head of propaganda. I accepted the verdict."

Then, essentially, a tie to Rabin was created. When Ben-'Ami returned to Israel a few months ago, the negotiations for the position of cabinet secretary began in complete discretion.

'I Went From Trash to Trash'

Shlomo Ben-'Ami hates when they write that he is the realization of the Israeli dream. He was born in Tangier, Morocco, where he was educated at the expensive Alliance school, and, at age 11 immigrated to Israel. "They took us to a transit camp, and from the transit camp to Qiryat Shemona, which was a neglected town. I went from trash to trash, and I am amazed that something came out of me," he related in a newspaper interview.

His older brother did not immigrate to Israel. He traveled from Morocco to London to the Geythar [?] Yeshiva, one of the most orthodox yeshivas in the world, and quickly became an ordained rabbi. From there he went to Toronto, and Professor Ben-'Ami claims that the sermons that he delivers in lively Yiddish are simply "overwhelming."

Ben-'Ami also has three sisters; one of them, Kokhava Beyton, remained in Qiryat Shemona. Last week, her house was damaged by Katyusha rockets. "A lioness," Ben-'Ami said of her, "a lucky woman" who, despite economic hardships raised wonderful children and took care of their education. The other two sisters live in Bat-Yam and Petah-Tiqva. None of them has a career.

During his youth, Ben-'Ami was educated at Kibbutz Afikim. Following his military service he went to study at Oxford and, by age 35, became a history professor of worldwide renown. He never closed himself up in the academic ivory tower. When he had something to say, he did so with grandeur, and drew a lot of heat. He came out, at one time, with a piercing criticism against the Likud government and against Menahem Begin who "released the demon of treachery" against Ariq Sharon, whom he called "an opportunist, a tyrant, a dangerous image," against David Levy, who "built a career on communal discrimination," and against the apathy of the public that "does not punish its leaders for their oversights."

"The communal issue greatly troubles me," Ben-'Ami said this week, and asked to close the account on this topic. "I am considerably perplexed that people come and interview me as a Cinderella story. What are they talking about, for goodness sake! About the Moroccan origin. If I do not respond to this, they will say that I am hiding something and deceitful. If I present it, they will say that I am using it. Sometimes, reporters come to me and return to the matter of my transit camp, my Moroccan mother, and I ask, would they talk this way with somebody else, as well? For example, my good friend, Ze'ev Sternhal. With him, they talk about his perception of fascism in France. Very infrequently, they conjure up the Polish mother of Israeli intellectuals, but very frequently they conjure up my Moroccan mother.

"This is a wound in the Israeli consciousness, which they use a lot. When Eli Bar Navi' was appointed head of the history department, they interviewed him in the newspaper. I took the interview, showed it to my wife, Ruthie, and asked her how the interview differed from the

interview they gave me, when I was appointed head of the history department. She did not see the difference. And I said to her, 'With him, they did not discuss the fact that he is from Romania.' I have no complaints. But, if, in France, for example, a Moroccan were appointed a university department head, they would not make this news. With us, yes. I am looked upon as a 'special care' youth that did this. They forget that the Moroccan Jewry immigrated to Israel with considerable cargo."

"I came at age 12 from an orderly educational system in Morocco, with languages, with study habits. This foundation, in my opinion, is what has brought me to where I am. But here, in Israel, there is a complex, and there is a sort of generalization, that has created Cinderellas where they do not exist. If you go to a transit camp and, afterward, to a development town, and, afterward, to a youth association, and reach the university—in essence what influenced you is the knowledge acquired in childhood, that is, the initial education that you received in the so-called backward society, in Morocco. After all, here, they took us to a transit camp, which is not exactly a place to raise people. But every immigration has paid a price for Zionism."

This week, the prime minister visited the Golan Heights and Qiryat Shemona. Before boarding the helicopter, Ben-'Ami was invited to Rabin's office, and one of the advisers offered him a helicopter ride. Ben-'Ami jumped at the chance and went to visit his mother and sister. Reporters who went along on the trip pointed out that Ben-'Ami was quiet, and it is known about him that he is an "outsider" among Rabin's group. He was photographed with his mother, who wore traditional Moroccan dress and, later, participated in a meeting of development leaders, where they spoke of the distress of unemployment and of solutions to it, a subject close to his heart.

Ben-'Ami claims that the foreign policy is important, but that what will determine the success of the government is a solution to the internal problems, the distress, and the unemployment. "Look at Bush; after all, he brought with him all possible successes in foreign policy...."

When Shim'on Peres spoke of the future leadership of the Labor Party, he was speaking about 'Amos 'Oz, Ehud Barak, and Shlomo Ben-'Ami. The professor, who is soft-spoken and does not relay forcefulness, captured Peres' heart while he was prime minister. "There was an intellectual tie between us," says Ben-'Ami. "I have never been a military [camp] man. We talked about interesting topics that were not connected to any sort of internal politics."

When Peres proposed the position of ambassador to Spain to Ben-'Ami, Ben-'Ami asked to think about it for a few days, and rose to the challenge. He speaks fluent Spanish, and quickly became one of those invited to the home of Spanish Prime Minister Phillipe Gonzales, and King Juan Carlos.

"I am a member of a tertulia of my contemporaries who are now in Spain in positions of influence," Ben-'Ami said at the time of his appointment. "The tertulia is a very Spanish phenomenon. A lunch in a well-known restaurant in Madrid, beginning at 1400 in the afternoon and running into the evening. The name tertulia was taken from the name of Tertullianus, the Roman philosopher, and it expresses a very Latin culture. You spend hours of intellectual elucidation, drinking and talking, with a set group of people. In my tertulia, there were members my age, a group of eight to nine people, in positions of influence. Phillipe Gonzales was also with us, as well as the most prominent book publisher, a district judge, a movie actor, a film producer, a member of parliament, the Duke from Alba. All sorts of metropolitan intellectuals like that. A fascinating conversation develops, an equal and open discussion between people is created. The Spanish are a democratic people in their souls. I also am of this culture; I, too, am a chatterer and love clever conversation. It is just right for me. I always saw myself as truly Mediterranean, in the more existential definition of the subject."

In the course of his tenure, the government changed, and he was compelled to present Likud positions. "I was not a loudspeaker for the government," he used to say then. "I was the spokesman for society. I did everything possible not to give the political appointees a bad name. I was the interpreter of reality, and not the shofar [ram's horn] for government decisions. I presented Israeli society as it is, with its divisions, with its crises. This is the best way to explain Israel, and thus I maintained my intellectual integrity."

[YEDI'OT AHARONOT] There are rumors that you conducted meetings with members of the PLO in Madrid.

[Ben-'Ami] "That is simply not true and devoid of any basis. This rumor began when HA'ARETZ interviewed Ibrahim Sus, and he said that he would very much like to meet me."

A Polite Refusal to David Levy

The leap made by Shlomo Ben-'Ami, the boy from the transit camp, to ambassador to Spain was a significant landmark in his career. The adopted son of the Labor Party was asked by David Levy, who was the foreign minister, to extend his tenure at the embassy. Ben-'Ami responded with a polite refusal. His dovish views still caused him discomfort, and he preferred to take an academic break, leaving for a sabbatical at the Wilson Institute in Washington, DC, with his wife and two of his sons. (His third son remained in Israel, in order to complete his medical studies.)

These days, Ben-'Ami is busy with the establishment of an institute for international relations at Tel Aviv University, following a serious contribution that he received from a wealthy family in Spain. He sits in a small room, with no furniture, in which a telephone is yet to be installed. Within days he reached the concluding stages

between himself and Yitzhaq Rabin regarding the nature of the position of cabinet secretary, and it is assumed that Shlomo Ben-'Ami will take the chair.

From this chair, he will try to build his political strength so that, when the time comes, he will be able to storm the party's upper echelons, a desire hidden in the past, at which, today, he permits himself to hint. But no more than that. "I have no master plan. I have no big plan. I am not a man of strength, but a man of circumstances. There are all kinds of models for political integration, and no one knows what will happen."

If, indeed, Shlomo Ben-'Ami reaches the prime minister's bureau, it will be a quality addition to the circle of people close to Rabin. Not one of them grew at 110 Hayarkon Street.

Number of Political Appointees Reported

93AE0140C Tel Aviv YEDIO'T AHARONOT in Hebrew 13 Nov 92 p 5

[Article by 'Ora 'Arif: "More Than 500 Job Holders Are Political Appointees"]

[Text] Yesterday former Justice Minister MK [Knesset Member] Dan Meridor said at a study day on the topic of "Public Service During a Change in Government" held at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem that the political appointments border on the criminal.

According to Meridor, "the party connection borders on graft. I appoint you, and you support me at party central or at a branch. In Meridor's view it is the system that is creating corruption: "Since you have to be nice to the voters, your interest is deflected from the good of the country to what the voters want to see. The voters want to see blood. They want to see the blood of an Arab who kills a Jew."

Others ask the judge: Why did you let the criminal off? Their anger is on him at that moment, and you, elected by the public, think at that moment: What can I do to have them elect me? Here a large part of our thinking is influenced by political considerations. It finds its expression in political appointments, perks, and the allocation of resources."

Meridor did not even spare the outgoing Likud government from criticism. In response to a question, he said: "A large portion of the public got the impression of dishonesty and corruption because of things like these. That is one of the reasons why the previous administration has disappeared from the scene."

According to Meridor the number of political appointments, among them ministerial aides and personal advisors, totals 500 or more: "There are perhaps 10 to 15 positions at the highest policy level in which I believe there has to be personal identification of the employee with the policy."

On the question of political appointments in the new government, Meridor said: "I found out that in one of the government ministries, with the change in government, one of the first things that the new minister's aide did was to look into the political views of the professionals in that ministry. I went to the minister, talked with him, and it was quashed."

Meridor praised the work of the press, the police, the State's Attorney and the State Controller for exposing corruption in government and called on government workers who participated in the study day "to fight the fight without fear. It is a very difficult war: We are fighting people who have government power." According to Meridor: "Exposure and publicity are part of the struggle. Many incidents would not have come to light but for a free press."

In a blunt allusion to Minister 'Arye Der'i, Meridor said: "There is something very wrong in this investigation. I do not want to damage the right to silence, but a person who keeps silent on issues of public money that affect his status and position cannot continue to hold public office. It may be that we need legislation on the issue."

Greater Number of Israelis Returning Home

93AE0140D Tel Aviv YEDIO'T AHARONOT in Hebrew 17 Nov 92 p 25

[Article by 'Ora 'Arif and Havatzelet Damari: "The Return Home"]

[Text] The economic crisis in the Western countries and the tireless activity on the part of Israeli missions abroad have, of late, been bringing a lot of Israeli emigres back to Israel. Data published yesterday by the Absorption Ministry show that about 9,000 Israelis living abroad will return home during the current year. That is an increase of 50 percent as compared to previous years.

Nadia Prigat, director of the department for returning citizens in the Absorption Ministry, says there is a lot of excitement about the number of Israelis turning to Israeli consulates abroad and asking for information booklets on the rights of returning citizens. According to her, about 10,000 such booklets were distributed this year as compared to 5,000 last year.

Prigat attributes the trend to come home to the concern of Israeli representatives abroad for bringing the emigres back to the fold. It may, of course, be possible to find a much more prosaic explanation: as existence abroad gets more difficult from day to day, what is more natural than to come home to Mom?

One of the striking projects for bringing people back, set up jointly by the Absorption Ministry and the Foreign Ministry, is 10 "Israeli houses" that have been established throughout the United States, Europe, and Australia. A lot of activities are held in these houses for the emigre communities, and next year four more such houses will be set up.

The story of the 'Ilan family can teach us something about the new trends among Israelis abroad. It has been 17 years since Dr. Dan 'Ilan, 41, left for a trip to the United States after his discharge from the army. During the course of that trip he met his wife Rachel, 40, and stayed with her in the United States. Last July they returned to Israel.

Rachel relates: "We lived in Boston. Dan studied economics and specialized in finance. I studied special education and psychology. Dan worked in a firm as an investment counselor. We said to ourselves: we will make a little money and then go back. Dan always yearned to go back, like all Israelis. To the home where he grew up, in Tzahala, and to his friends.

In 1981 our first son Avshalom was born, and three more sons followed. All that time we kept talking about going home. Dan yearned for the "gang." But then we were into so many things. I was studying, he had a job, the children. And it was also a good time in the United States to buy a house for a song. At first we bought a house in Cambridge. Later we sold it and bought another—in a neighborhood with a lot of a Jews.

Why did we go back? It may be that the hard economic situation now in the United States had something to do with it, but for us something else was decisive. Our oldest son will be 12 in no time, and that is the age when you say: Now or never. It is time to bring him home to Israel, as a Jew.

We got to the point where we had to decide. I know a lot of people who think that way. Just now when we decided to return, the economic situation there got tough and we saw that it was the right decision. We came here and found our real life."

Even before they took the big step of returning to Israel, Dan signed a work contract with one of the banks in Israel. Rachel insisted on that. She did not want to come back to Israel without economic security. Rachel: "Believe me, that all the Israelis there are terribly homesick all the time."

Rivqa 'Abula'fia, 38, has also returned home now. Seven years ago she traveled to the United States where she completed her post-doctorate work in molecular biology and afterward worked in a biotechnology firm. From time to time, she admits, she would think of going back to Israel for good. Two weeks ago, the time was right, she made it happen, and landed here.

"One could say it is a "return phenomenon," she says. "That phenomenon began already a year ago and gained momentum last summer. Many of my friends really did go back, and that had an effect. One friend tells another that he went back, found work and that things are OK, and they hear it abroad, turn to the 'Israeli house' and the consulate, and that is how it progresses."

After finishing her studies at Harvard, Rivqa worked in a modern cancer-treatment facility. "The conditions

were excellent; the salary, great; and the work was interesting. Every year I would hop over to Israel for a visit and kept up my ties to the family."

Two weeks ago she came back. She is still not adjusted. She does not have work here yet. "It was a rather courageous decision to come after I was well settled there, but I know that in the end I will find work and I am willing to compromise."

During the entire time of her stay in the United States, Rivqa maintained regular contact with the consulate and also recently with the "Israeli house" in Boston. During the Gulf war she visited Israel and already then, she relates, she made up her mind to return. "The feeling only got stronger after the elections," she says. "It seems that good times are ahead. Even from an economic standpoint. The intifadah has weakened, the economic guarantees were signed, and the peace process has begun."

"The economic situation in the United States at the moment is not good. It is hard to find jobs and a decent standard of living. It is also hard to save the way you used to. Suddenly I had the feeling that one could nevertheless live in Israel just as well. Maybe with a lesser salary, but with no less a standard of living. I said to myself: 'I am not going to be really rich now. So it is better that I be with my own people and family.' I decided to compromise."

"What can you do? After several years abroad you say to yourself: Enough, the time has come to go back to Israel. To the family. To friends. And deep inside you know that the best place is here in Israel. I would prefer to finish my life here."

Analysis of Zionism Definitions, Right Wing

93AE0056B Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 16 Oct 92
p B3

[Article by Nadav Shraga'i: "Who Is a Zionist to the Right?"]

[Text] Late in the evening, two weeks ago, Efraim Me'ir from Bet El rose from his place in the audience, in the event hall at Bet Sokolov in Tel Aviv, and asked Refa'el Eytan: "What is your red line in light of the withdrawal moves of the current government, and where is the line of obedience to such a government drawn?" Eytan made it clear to Me'ir that if the audience sitting before him was seeking from him a definition of the stage after which it would be necessary to "go out to the streets with Kalatchnikov rifles," he would not supply them with that merchandise. "Kalatchnikovs in the streets are the end of the State of Israel," said Eytan. Then, however, he was interrupted by Avner Erlich, a builder from Gush Dan, who has accompanied the settlements from their very beginning. Erlich quoted Menahem Begin and claimed that prior to evacuating the Yamit strip, Begin told several of his confidants that if the evacuation brought about a struggle among brothers and, due to this, Jewish

blood was spilled in the Sinai, there would be no evacuation, and the Yamit strip would not be evacuated. In light of these words, Erlich sought to know, "was it not justified to spill Jewish blood so that Yamit would not be returned?"

Eytan made it clear that he was not speaking of any possibility that did not fall within the realm of legal means, for if not "we are entering anarchy, and with Jews, anarchy is like uncorking a bottle...."

He noted that a general strike throughout the entire country, as a response to decisions to withdraw from the Golan Heights or from Judaea, Samaria, and the Gaza strip, does not violate the law. "If the Israel Labor Union can bring the country to a standstill over money, then it is possible to take the same step over matters of greater principle. Afterwards, he reminded [the audience] that he had been chief of staff during the evacuation of Yamit, and quoted what Menahem Begin had told him: "Begin said that if 50,000 people had gone down to Yamit instead of 5,000, there would not have been an evacuation. And I say," added Eytan, "that if 100,000 people come to the Golan Heights equipped with blankets, tents, and coolers, then the chance that something close to withdrawal will occur is close to zero."

The dialogue about the line of obedience by the right, organized by the NATIV publication, continued for quite a while. Elyakim Haetzani spoke of a "nonviolent civil revolt." Sami Bar-Lev from Qatzrin spoke in favor of a unified front among the Golan settlements, and Attorney Yo'av Efron, also from Qatzrin, quoted Article 97 of the Penal Code, whereby "he who purposefully commits any act leading any territory to be removed from the sovereignty of the state or to be included in the sovereignty of a foreign country, shall be sentenced to death or life imprisonment." Only once during the course of the evening was the word Zionism mentioned. Ariyeh Stav, the leader of the dialogue, mentioned incidentally, as an obvious point, that the audience and the participants all agreed "that this government is clearly not Zionist." Nobody in the audience reacted to this statement, and the silence was interpreted as admission. This comment by Stav cannot be made little of, as a mere cut.

Part of the basis of the argument currently being conducted in the right regarding the "line of obedience" is the assumption that the right and the public classified as the right is actually up against a non-Zionist government. As such, perhaps it is also illegitimate. Those who, in the future, seek the codes to understand the behavior of the right during the period of the Labor Government, headed by Rabin, will have to return to Stav's incidental comment. A considerable portion of the ideological leadership of the right in Israel is indeed convinced that the current Government of Israel is not a Zionist government.

In the next issue of NATIV, the second part of the dialogue will be published. Participating are Hanan

Porat from the National Religious Party, writer Moshe Shamir, currently a member of "Emunim", Dr. Yisra'el Eldad and Ariyeh Stav, the editor of the periodical. All four expressed doubt, which they explained, regarding the Zionism of the Rabin government. Historian Professor Yo'av Gelber also maintains (in the last issue of NEKUDAH) that the "Zionist left" of today is not leftist and it is doubtful whether it is Zionist."

Gelber maintains that the common element to all those called the "Zionist left, which overcomes differences of opinion on other matters," is their attitude toward the Jewish Arab struggle regarding the future of the land of Israel, in the circumstances created after the Six Day War. Its roots, according to Gelber, are not struck in Hashomer Hatza'ir or the Socialist League, "who supported the territorial integrity for purposes of absorbing immigration and settlement...nor in the Ahdut Ha'avoda movement, which aspired toward territorial integrity without national fraternity. Not even in the leftist Po'alei Tzion." The spiritual fathers of Meretz, in Gelber's opinion, are not Tabenkin, Ya'ari, or Hazan, and not even Yitzhaq Ben-Aharon and Ariyeh Eli'av. The roots of today's left, according to Gelber, "are struck, to a certain extent, in the various factions of the Communist, anti-Zionist left of the days of the Jewish settlement [in mandatory Palestine], particularly the Brit Shalom group, a small group of intellectuals who organized in the mid-1920's in order to act toward Jewish-Arab understanding."

"Brit Shalom," writes Professor Gerber, did not have a firm ideological platform, and the sole common denominator to all of its liberal and social-democratic members was their moderation on the Arab question and their belief that the solution of the Arab question—i.e., obtaining the agreement of the Arabs—was a necessary condition of the realization of Zionism. In an effort to fulfill that condition, they were willing to compromise on fundamental tenets of Zionism, such as the effort to achieve a Jewish majority in Israel, the size of immigration, and the aspiration of sovereignty. Soon, compromise went from a means to an end and an ideology in and of itself, centered around 'a country belonging to two peoples,' and an admission of the national rights of the Palestinians in the land of Israel."

Ariyeh Stav, the editor of NATIV, goes further and asks: "has our left, which is cognizant of reality and analyzes it rationally, given up on the sovereign existence of Jews in their state?" Yisra'el Eldad says in this regard that the strange combination of Shas [Sephardi Torah Guardians] and Shulamit Aloni's Meretz is strange only ostensibly, "because the coalition that was created between them was created on the basis of the following understanding: I agree to your anti-Zionism (apathy to the territorial integrity of the land of Israel and evasion of the draft) and you agree to my anti-Judaism,"—the ring of secularness and not the ring of sanctity," as Eldad puts it.

Hanan Porat feels, according to his statement, as if he were in a theater of the absurd: "Here is a government that defines itself as a Zionist government, and Zionism is derived from Zion—and it sees its main goal in fighting so that Jews will not reside in Zion, whether it is the city of David, which is Zion, and whether it is the Old City, which is the expansion of Zion, Jerusalem. This is on behalf of Zionism and on behalf of a national Zionist priority...It must truly be asked: what brings Jews, who have, notwithstanding, played a substantial role in the history of the building of this land, both in the realm of settlement and defense, to conduct themselves as anti-Zionists? For Yitzhaq Rabin and his colleagues are from here...what leads people to such terrible renunciation of the land of Israel? And this is renunciation that does not even come like in the wake of the return of spies in tears, but in some sort of joy, the joy of shattering. You feel some sort of rise, some sort of celebration, celebration at distress. They are constantly hurrying to emphasize: 'it is not that they are forcing us, we want to withdraw of our own will, want to freeze, want to dry.' What brings people to such renunciation of the land of Israel, of the home in which we live?" Porat asks and also reaches the conclusion that a "process of de-Zionization is occurring here, a process of some sort of desire to disconnect and shake the foundations upon which Zionism was built."

Porat diagnoses "erosion and the loss of faith in the ability of Zionism." To him, he explains, "the feeling of inability derives from an erosion in willpower, and the erosion in willpower is based upon an erosion of awareness. To me, the point of origin is really the loss of awareness...forgetting that justice is on our side; i.e., forgetting the Zionist justice, which, in my perception, is really the loss of recognition of the heritage of generations, the recognition of who the people of Israel is, where it is coming, where it is going, what its objective is, what its role is.... There is a terrible, touching expression by Rabbi Cook of blessed memory, which says: "What does old age do to sentiment?" "What does old age do to sentiment? National sentiment can age, as well. What old

age does to sentiment...there are young people who are also old. See a couple whose love has already aged after three years. What happens to it when sentiment grows old? Rabbi Cook says: "If you find ways to revive the feelings from the source of recognition and faith, it shall live, and if not, it shall dry up and fall off...." When you read the press today, not only the press termed the leftist press, you see the embodiment of "sentiment grown old," the Zionist sentiment that once was...."

Writer Moshe Shamir also speaks of "anti-Zionist moods", manifested in his opinion in Peace Now, as a political movement. Peace Now, claims Shamir, derives its strength from the mood of "nowism" that has taken over Israeli society, among the young generation in particular, in the wake of similar moods in the international arena and the Western societies of plenty. "This is a wild burst of permissiveness, of egocentric hedonism, of let me be and leave me alone with all of your ideological nonsense." This is a wild burst of nihilism in lifestyles and in the field of culture and entertainment. This is the street of amusements, a kind of Dizengoff that has taken over Israeli society. The minister of education, who does not differentiate between our matriach, Rachel and Rahab the whore, is a clear product of that permissiveness which says "the hell with everything" in an insulting stammer and, on the other hand, grooms snobby elite groups, granting the bulk of permissiveness itself an air of "freedom of spirit," such as the series of attacks full of verbiage and confusion by S. Yizhar against education, against values—and, in effect, against Zionism, which he dares not to call by name."

The role of philosophers, educators and writers from the nationalist Jewish camp, summarizes Shamir, is to "renew the faith in nationalism," and mainly "the morale and pragmatic reliance on the obligatory belonging of each individual and each group in the public—obligatory belonging to the people, to its past, to the struggle for its survival, to its future. The feeling of belonging," maintains Shamir, "has always been the foundation of human life, and even more so of the life of the people of Israel."

Analysis of Rabin's Imports Liberalization Policy*93AE0045A Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew
9 Oct 92 p B1*

[Article by Judy Maltz: "Retreating From Liberalization"]

[Text] It is no accident that the day after Yitzhaq Rabin attacked the "Fogels of every stripe," the ministers of Treasury and of Industry and Commerce hinted at a willingness to retreat from the imports liberalization process. After all, both Beige Shohet and Mikhah Harish well understand that it is very hard to fight a prime minister under pressure. When those pressures come simultaneously from government ministers, the league of industrialists, workers' committees and labor council secretaries, they are even harder to withstand.

As a prime minister who has a hard time understanding economic issues, Rabin actually expresses great interest in the subject of exposure. This week he summoned the Treasury Minister and the Governor of the Bank of Israel for a special discussion on the future of the exposure policy. In the discussion he stressed over and over that employment is a much more important issue today than industrial productivity; therefore the policy of exposure should be examined only and exclusively on the basis of its effect on the problem of unemployment.

At the conclusion of the meeting it was established—or more precisely, Rabin dictated to the heads of Treasury and the Bank of Israel—that the textile imports liberalization process would be reexamined and that they were to keep regular track of the effect of exposure on employment in the remaining industrial sectors.

There is no doubt that the issue of unemployment has begun to panic the prime minister and, as many politicians before him have done when they found themselves in similar situations, he is going after bureaucrats. Fogel certainly was never one of Rabin's favorites, especially after he dared to cut the defense establishment budget in 1985, when Rabin served as defense minister and he himself was head of the budget branch. But it may be worthwhile to note here that the phrase "the Fogels of every stripe" is not Rabin's invention, but that of the heads of the Industrialist Union.

For Dov Lautman and his friends in the Union, Fogel is still identified with Dani Gilerman and the League of Chambers of Commerce who stand behind the program of opening the economy up to imports. From their point of view, he, too, is considered an enemy. After all, before coming to Treasury, Fogel served as economic adviser to the League.

Fogel is not the first to find himself on the industrialists' "black list." Preceding him in line is Tzvi Qorn, the previous general manager of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. In recent years Qorn was subjected to heavy pressure from the industrialists, intended to persuade him to abandon his policy of exposure. The

Industrialist Union banned him after he refused to bow to those pressures. By the way, in contrast to previous general managers in the Ministry of Industry and Commerce who took care to maintain good relations with the industrialists, Qorn is having a hard time finding work in the private sector and is still at home, unemployed. "Twenty-four hours after Qorn left the ministry," says a senior ministry official, "the industrialists recaptured it, and all the programs he had put together for expanding liberalization were quickly put back in the drawer."

For industrialists like Dov Lautman, who gave Rabin full backing during the election campaign, a new era began on the 23d of June. Beyond Lautman's support of Rabin in the election campaign, he was also considered the prime minister's personal friend. According to his confidants, the two of them meet at least once a week to exchange opinions on economic issues. Nevertheless, Lautman denies that he is exploiting the meetings with Rabin to influence him on the exposure issue.

As sources at Treasury note, Lautman does not need Shohet or Harish; he goes straight to the prime minister. It may be that he himself never warned Rabin that the exposure program would cause plant closings throughout the country and massive employee layoffs, but the prime minister certainly got the message, one way or another. Rabin, after all, knows that if he cannot deal successfully with the unemployment problem within a year or two, both he and the Labor Party are lost. That may explain why he took care this week to meet with the heads of Treasury and the Bank of Israel for a discussion of the exposure policy.

Rabin certainly also hears warnings at home against the exposure policy. His son-in-law, attorney 'Avi Filosof, was formerly very active in the Industrialist Union when he served as joint general manager of the 'Elit Corporation, and he continues to maintain close ties to the heads of the organization. Today, too, Filosof does not hide his views against the exposure program. In response to the question of whether he talks about it with the prime minister, Filosof answers: "I will not answer that question. I talk to him about a broad variety of issues, including economic issues."

The Industrialists' Campaign Is Succeeding

There is no doubt that the industrialists' campaign against exposure is succeeding: during the course of his visit to Germany a few weeks ago, Rabin learned that the heads of the textile branch of the Union had convened an emergency session to protest Treasury's decision to reduce duties on textile imports. The prime minister immediately picked up the telephone to Shohet and demanded that he "get off the issue."

During the period of Likud rule, the industrialists did the lobbying work themselves. Since the ascendancy of Labor they have been assisted, as well, by the heads of the workers' councils. The latter, who were drafted for

the party in the election campaign, today have a good excuse to approach the prime minister for a quid pro quo.

In the prime minister's office today there is no economic adviser like 'Amos Rubin, for example (who was Yitzhaq Shamir's adviser), who can calm Rabin down and explain to him in simple terms that retreat from the exposure policy today will, perhaps, save a few hundred jobs; but within a few years layoffs would be inevitable because it is very hard to maintain factories that have no reason for existence. The person with a lot of influence on Rabin in these matters is the general manager of his office, Shim'on Shabbes, who is not considered a liberal in his economic views. The tense relations between Shabbes and Shohet do not help matters.

The exposure policy again made headlines at the beginning of September when the heads of Treasury decided to reduce the duties on the import of textile products and wood from countries of the Far East—from effective rates of 300 percent to 400 percent to a maximum rate of 110 percent. The industrialists were, of course dissatisfied, even though they knew they could make do with a rate of 110 percent next year. What bothered them more was Treasury's intent to lower the duties to a rate of 8 to 12 percent over seven years.

In a meeting at the end of last week, which included the president of the Industrialist Union and the heads of the textile branch of the Union, the ministers of Treasury and of Industry and Commerce expressed a willingness in principle, for the first time, to implement changes in the original program. The industrialists asked the ministers to impose higher duties than planned when the exposure process begins. They requested the imposition of caps on textile imports, the customary practice throughout the western world, including the United States, they claimed. Shohet promised to respond to the requests by the end of December. He said he was still learning the issue and had not yet consolidated a position. The estimate is that in the end a compromise will be reached in which maximum duty rates at the end of the exposure period will be raised to 16 to 20 percent instead of 8 to 12 percent. But no caps will be imposed on imports. The heads of Treasury absolutely reject any attempt to renew the import caps and warn that to do so would bring back the era of protectionism in which only the associates of the minister got a cap—and got rich.

In any case a government that displays weakness and bows to the pressures invites more pressure. As a result the entire exposure process is likely to collapse. Shohet knows that, too, but has a dual loyalty: on the one hand he very much appreciates the views of the liberal economists at Treasury, Fogel, of course, among them. On the other hand, he is considered, at least thus far, to be one of the ministers closest to the prime minister. As a man hailing from the Negev, he is also particularly sensitive to the unemployment problem.

There is no doubt that the exposure policy and the problem of unemployment, from the point of view of Yitzhaq Rabin, are two sides of the same coin. Those who express support for creating new jobs cannot support opening the economy up to cheap imports, and thus jeopardize, as he understands it, the livelihood of industrial workers. The prime minister therefore appointed a special team in his office, headed by Dr. Ha'im 'Asa, to put together suggestions for increasing employment. This week he also set up a special ministerial committee on the unemployment issue. One might say that in so doing Rabin is expressing a lack of confidence in Treasury policy.

There is no doubt that dealing with the issue of exposure will be the first acid test of the government's commitment to liberalization: whether it is really firm in its intent to continue the process or whether all of this is just lip service to the Americans, who have a strong desire to see a market economy in Israel.

Trade Official on Investment, Imports

93AE0074A Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT (Financial Supplement) in Hebrew 20 Oct 92 pp 1, 9

[Article by Gid'on 'Eshet: "Sharoni's Exposure"]

[Text] A story appeared at the beginning of the year in THE WALL STREET JOURNAL: Israel developed a secret photography system through the American "Raycon" company. A financial dispute arose in the course of the project, which ended in a crisis. The American company asked the representatives of Israel to leave the plant premises. When they left, an American security man arrested them and found confidential documents in their belongings. The American newspaper accuses Israel of attempting to steal documents on the development of the system in order to manufacture it in the "El-Op" company in Nes Tziyona. The director general of "El-Op" at the time, Nati Sharoni, denied everything.

Today, Nati Sharoni is the new director general of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. A month and a half in the position, and the man's security past is immediately recognizable. The press and the public will know what he thinks only after what he has done becomes evident. With Sharoni, almost every "yes" has a "but." Pragmatism may be a good characteristic, but up against our strong industrial lobby, a single "but" can grow to the dimensions of a retreat from policy. Meanwhile, the industrialists lobby in Israel can only be pleased with the new director general, after his predecessor, Tzvi Koren, was regarded by this lobby as a class enemy.

Sharoni (58) arrived at the second-most important economic position with impressive achievements. Thirty years in the army. A reserve major general, assistant director general of "Tadiran," director general of "El-Op," economic minister in New York, and active in diverse economic fields in the past year. Since his retirement from the army, Sharoni has been identified with the Labor Party, and he was active in the recent

election campaign. There he also became acquainted with Micha Harish, the secretary general of the party and the minister of industry.

When Harish became a minister, Sharoni came to him with several suggestions for reorganizing the system of investment incentives. Matters that he had kept pent up from the time of his service in New York. Harish listened, and after a few days called him and offered him the position of director general. This week, he was appointed by the minister of finance to head the committee of directors general for handling concentrations of unemployment.

[Sharoni] We already began to work on this subject one month ago. I asked representatives of finance and tourism to join me on a tour of several places in the country where there is great unemployment. I wanted to see how the situation could be eased, and now. We found that in several places there is a problem of land for industrial firms. In Yokne'am, for example, the land reserve has been exhausted, but there is demand. I immediately found about 40 dunams. In several places there is land, but it is undeveloped. In Carmi'el, there is a large industrial area, but it does not have convenient access to the main road. In many development towns there are abandoned "commercial centers." With a small outlay, and with the cooperation of the local authority, these centers can be improved. When they are pleasant, fixed up, and attractive, more small businesses will come. The residents also deserve an attractive commercial center. It is part of the local quality of life. In certain places, a site that will attract tourists can be developed immediately.

[YEDI'OT] That's a drop in the bucket. There are developed industrial areas and nice commercial centers in the country, there just are no investors. In Be'er Sheva, for example.

[Sharoni] At the moment, I still don't know how to solve a problem of the magnitude of Be'er Sheva. In a place like that, meanwhile, I try to persuade a known investor to go there. "Vishay" will establish a plant there, Stef Wertheimer will erect a plant near 'Omer. Such a focal point will attract additional investors. In 1986, I laid the cornerstone of an "El-Op" plant in Shderot. At that time, it was the end of the earth. You cannot find land for an industrial firm today in Shderot.

[YEDI'OT] And that, in your opinion, will compete successfully with the benefits that you give today in the territories?

[Sharoni] True, it is easy today to invest in Barkan (near Ari'el). That is going to end. The directors general committee for the reclassification of development areas will end that preference. When Barkan goes down in preference, the attractiveness of Ashqelon, of Yokne'am, and of Be'er Sheva will go up. The expected change and our attention to specific locations will bring rapid

results. I can promise that in one and a half years there will be 500 new jobs in Yokne'am, 100 of these in a few days.

Here, more or less, ends the decisive segment of the new director general. Sharoni refuses to address many substantial issues that are related to his ministry's policy. There are more subjects of "yes" with a "but."

The day after Yom Kippur, MAMMON published an article that attempted to analyze why there are so few new investments. Following that article, Sharoni received two telephone calls from friends who were angry about the plans to reduce the benefits in the Law for the Encouragement of Capital Investment. First of all, the director general sought to clarify who was the senior official in his ministry who had supported precisely this indecent proposal, which had come out of the Ministry of Finance. Second, the director general consulted with the minister, and the two of them decided not to say anything. Meanwhile, a government committee is being established to examine the subject. Not surprisingly, representatives of the interested parties—the industrialists—are members of the committee.

[YEDI'OT] What kind of a committee is that, when representatives of the interested parties sit on it? Couldn't it have been sufficient to hear their testimony?

[Sharoni] First of all, they are a minority on the committee. Second, it is good that a client on a specific issue will sit on a committee that deals with changes that relate to it. That is also what is accepted in the world, and also on other committees. Not all wisdom is to be found in government employees.

[YEDI'OT] The prime minister said about a month ago that IS 10 billion, investment monies, had not been used. What is happening at the Investment Center? Are they in neutral?

[Sharoni] What is true is that about 50 percent of the approvals for investments have not been used. How much money is involved? At this moment, I do not know, and it is also not important. What is important is to examine how it happened. After a request for tenders to consulting firms we chose the "Aman" company, which is studying about 100 cases today. We will get the results next month, and then we will decide what to do.

[YEDI'OT] There is talk of a decision to retreat from the process of exposing domestic production to imports.

[Sharoni] The process of exposure is not only positive, but necessary for the economy. On this issue of principle, I have nothing to add to everything that the experts have already said. The exposure to imports from the United States and Europe has contributed a great deal to our industrial functioning.

[YEDI'OT] But?

[Sharoni] But there are sensitive areas. The reference is to imports from countries that are not in Europe or

North America. In some of them, there is nothing called cost accounting. In some of them, the concept of cost differs from that with which we are acquainted. In some of them, wages are very low. A decision must be made how to carry out the exposure, without increasing the number of unemployed during the next two years.

[YEDI'OT] What does that mean?

[Sharoni] A more controlled process of reduction of import duties. I am speaking mainly about textiles, but there may also be a problem with certain household items such as ceramics. In textiles, by the way, larger and more liberal countries than us protect against cheap imports.

[YEDI'OT] What will you do and when?

[Sharoni] A team is studying the subject. We will recommend within a month what to do and how to do it.

What will they do? It is difficult to know how the struggle between the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Industry will end. But if the assumption that Sharoni speaks only after he has done something is correct, then import duties on textile products apparently will soon be raised. Very soon.

[YEDI'OT] What about our exposure to international standards. Why should you not decide tomorrow that every standard that exists in the U.S.A., Germany, and in Sweden will henceforth also be a possible standard in Israel?

[Sharoni] On the level of principle, what you said is acceptable to me. As exporters, we have an interest in adopting standards of countries with which we trade.

[YEDI'OT] But?

[Sharoni] It is not possible to do that in one shot. It is necessary to scan the standards and to study if a sweeping generalization, such as you propose, would not harm consumers. Why? Let us assume that in Britain there is a standard in inches for doors. Could we make doors according to that standard here?

[YEDI'OT] Yes, why should you care about that. Let the consumer decide whether he wants a two-meter door or an 80-inch door.

[Sharoni] The lack of uniformity in standards has an economic cost. They exist everywhere in the world, and not by chance. They make it much easier for the consumer and reduce manufacturers' costs. But understand me correctly, I see a benefit in acting to adopt standards of orderly countries.

[YEDI'OT] A review of all the official standards in Israel would take 40 years.

[Sharoni] I visited the Standards Institute only once. I estimate that such a survey could be completed in six months.

Army Politics, Hierarchy Discussed

93AE0051A Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT (Weekend Supplement) in Hebrew 9 Oct 92 pp 9-11, 20

[Interview with former Army Secretary Yermi Olmert by Na'omi Levitsky in Ramat Eylan; date not given; first three paragraphs are YEDI'OT AHARONOT introduction, other background paragraphs included]

[Text] After almost 30 years of service, Brigadier General Yermi Olmert has retired from the IDF [Israel Defense Forces]. The second of the four Olmert brothers, and the brother of media personalities Ehud Olmert and Yosi Olmert, he has kept his silence until now. His last position was particularly sensitive. For two years, he served as the military secretary of Defense Minister Moshe Arens. As such, Yermi Olmert was the defense minister's military advisor, personal sensor in the Army, and the coordinator between the chief of general staff [CGS], the defense minister, and the Defense Ministry director-general.

Olmert held a complicated position, which was made even more complicated by the fact that he served under Arens. Arens' tenure as defense minister is characterized by leaks and reports emanating from both the Defense Ministry and the CGS's bureau, which spoke of strong tensions between Arens and the CGS [Ehud Baraq], and between the CGS and Defense Ministry Director-General David 'Ivri. Olmert stood in the middle. This week, I met with him at his home in Ramat Eylan.

[Olmert] As Army secretary, I was the senior military element required to connect between the two ends of the building [i.e., act as liaison between the Army general staff and the Defense Ministry]. In this regard, the Army secretary's position is especially complicated and complex. I am a soldier in uniform. But, at the same time, I am an aid to the defense minister, not to the CGS, and certainly not to bureau chief of the CGS. The greatest friction in this triangle is on the level of the aids. In some of the wrestling matches, neither the minister nor the CGS were participants. I do not know, perhaps they [i.e., the CGS's aids] updated the CGS more. I did not think that I had to involve Misha [Arens' nickname] in technical matters.

[Levitsky] What do you mean by "technical matters"?

[Olmert] One of the things that greatly troubled Arens was the Sholef gun [the "Slammer" 155-mm, 52-caliber self-propelled howitzer; Arens was sympathetic toward the project and ordered the IDF to study procurement of the Sholef. He also ordered that money be injected into Soltam, the developer of the gun, to complete development of a prototype. CGS Ehud Baraq appointed Major General Mitzna' to head a committee that recommended that existing guns be improved, and that the Sholef not be procured]. Arens wanted very much to discuss this matter exhaustively. He failed. In our estimation, this matter was drawn out longer than it should have been. We experienced friction with the CGS's bureau over the

setting of a timetable for discussing the Sholef. I did not involve the minister. Nor did I say to him, "You have a problem with the CGS—bang your fist on the table to expedite this discussion."

[Levitsky] The friction between the two bureaus ultimately reached the point where you wrote a letter to the CGS's bureau in which you made strong arguments about the behavior of bureau personnel.

[Olmert] Correct, I wrote the CGS bureau chief a very strong letter regarding our joint duty rosters. The letter contained a series of business-like arguments regarding daily operations.

[Levitsky] What arguments for example?

[Olmert] Responses to requests by citizens for example. We are required to respond in an especially intelligent, reliable, and rapid way to a letter written to the defense minister by the most moronic citizen about utter nonsense. Matters were drawn out for too long, and memoranda [written to the CGS's bureau] went unanswered. When I would see a fifth and sixth memorandum on a matter dragged out for more than a year without a response being given, it would drive me nuts.

Another of our arguments concerned the timing of meetings with the CGS. I thought that the hierarchy required the major generals to level with the CGS, and the CGS's bureau to level with the minister's bureau.

[Levitsky] What happened regarding the Sholef gun? What you call here technical matters ultimately became substantive. The IDF did not want [to procure] the Sholef, and Arens wanted the IDF to purchase it. That is a matter of substance.

[Olmert] There were debates. The subject of equipping the IDF with the gun had not been exhausted. Arens wanted to hold discussions in December-January. We failed to set a time for the discussions. When the CGS bureau was ready to hold a discussion, Misha did not want to hold it. It was already too close to elections, something like April, and Misha maintained that any decision would be interpreted as a political decision.

He feared that, if he decided in favor of the Sholef, he would be charged with trying to win the votes of Yoqne'am [where the gun's developer, Soltam, is located] and other areas where defense industries are located. If he decided not to procure the Sholef, he would be blamed for causing layoffs.

[Levitsky] Did the chief of staff intentionally drag out the discussions to create a situation in which the defense minister would not want to make a decision for political reasons?

[Olmert] Yes, I believe that the CGS dragged out the discussion intentionally, but not for political reasons. Ehud [Baraq] is not so stupid as to do such transparent things. Never for a moment do I think that he tried to

draw Arens into a situation where Arens could not make a decision for political reasons. It was perhaps a tactic, but not politics.

[Levitsky] Senior officers have said some harsh things about Arens which implied, more than once, a lack of esteem for his professionalism.

[Olmert] This phenomenon of officers speaking anonymously roils me and shows little wisdom. It could be that they underestimated Arens. I have no doubt that people would speak differently if the Likud were to have remained in power. Officers are at pains to call me to tell me about post-election celebrations in all kinds of military forums. This phenomenon is out of place in the Army, which purports to be apolitical.

[Levitsky] It seems to me that Arens had a communications problem with the senior officers' cadre. In his most recent tenure, in contrast to his first tenure as defense minister, he flexed his muscles immediately upon entering office, demonstrating to everyone who the boss was. In the Army, they thought that he had changed. However, they soon saw that he was the same Arens, and that they and Arens did not understand each other, inasmuch as Arens had not served in the Army and, in their perception, continued to speak Yiddish, whereas they spoke the language of native-born Israelis.

[Olmert] Arens' professional qualifications as defense minister are rather well known. He chaired the Knesset foreign affairs and defense committee and is an aeronautical engineer. Even [former Prime Minister] Golda Meir wanted to appoint him to a very sensitive position in the Defense Ministry. It fell through because it was assumed that it would be politically unacceptable.

True, he does not have the resume. He never commanded the Har'el Brigade of the Palmah [strike forces of the Hagana, a Jewish defense organization established in Palestine during the British Mandate]. Nor does he have long service in the IDF leading up to the post of CGS. However, Moshe Arens imposed a number of positions and decisions regarding several subjects. Only time will prove how correct they were.

[Levitsky] Can you give examples of positions which Arens imposed on the CGS?

[Olmert] First of all, the IDF's operational plan. Arens discarded the previous operational plan, arguing that it was not a plan. The Army initially proceeded on the basis of expansionary assumptions, taking impermissible budgetary risks. Arens laid down an evolving plan. I should tell you that it was very difficult to convince the Army that it must operate in this way, and that it was unfeasible for it to operate according to the system that had once been in effect. Arens permitted (Major General 'Amiram) Mitzna' (N.L. [expansion not given]) to prepare an operational plan to serve as a guiding principle.

[Levitsky] There was a particularly strident debate between Baraq and Arens over the manpower strength

that should be maintained in the West Bank. It seems to me that Arens imposed his opinion regarding this matter more than once.

[Olmert] Arens was aware of the domestic security issue. He sensed that the damage caused by terrorist attacks there [in the West Bank] was not limited to the settlers, who are the apple of his eye. His assessment was that, if we permit the Arab population to win the contest with the settlers, the way to the center of the country would be short. As defense minister, he could not condone the absence of security for the Jewish population here in Israel.

[Levitsky] You say that the defense minister is very aware of this. Is not the CGS aware?

[Olmert] Certainly, the CGS is aware. However, let me state clearly, relative to the Army, Arens was no doubt more sensitive to, and placed a greater priority on, providing security for the movement of Israelis in the territories. I say the Army, because this is not just the CGS.

[Levitsky] Perhaps the Army, taking a more comprehensive view, perceived more urgent priorities and the unfeasibility of pouring all forces into the West Bank. An Army also needs to train.

[Olmert] There were debates over the quantity of forces in the West Bank. But which debates are we talking about? One may think that Arens wanted to introduce more divisions, but the Army said, "Divisions need to train." [The Army did] not even [want to consider introducing] brigades. Sometimes, there were debates over [introducing] two more special teams and another two, three, or four companies.

[Levitsky] Why was the CGS opposed?

[Olmert] I cannot read Ehud's mind, nor can I speak on his behalf. However, I have no doubt that he estimated that similar results could be achieved with fewer forces. He also estimated that we could absorb a certain dose of activity against Jews in the territories. In this regard, Arens said, "I am not willing to absorb [such activity]." I have no doubt that Arens' pressure on the CGS resulted in the expansion of the special units and their massive employment.

There was a period which we in the [defense minister's] bureau viewed as a deterioration. We summoned a forum on a Saturday night to discuss [the deterioration] with all security elements, and civilians as well. Misha then told Ehud, "If the Army cannot put forth directions, ideas, and actions, as far as I am concerned, you and the entire general staff will go down to the field to seek a solution there," which is a harsh statement.

[Levitsky] Officers truly used to complain about Arens' level of interference, recounting his love affair with the computer on his desk.

[Olmert] The computer was the reporting system. They suffered a severe psychological crisis over this. I know. This computer gave him one thing, namely the reporting which Intelligence Branch operations transmits to a long line of subscribers. The computer enabled him to know what was happening in real time. Do you know what happened? Sometimes, we asked the CGS's bureau about an incident, and they said that they did not know anything about it yet. I assume that this is sour grapes on the part of the CGS's bureau.

I would contact the CGS's aids. But sometimes the minister would pick up the hotline and asked the CGS, "Ehud, what is happening?" I suggest that you direct your questions to whoever was not in the know. The CGS's aids should have examined themselves, rather than creating a situation conducive to friction between the defense minister and the CGS.

[Background] Just before retiring, Olmert took a stand at a conference of the IDF's senior command, where he had harsh things to say. He spoke of anonymous leaks and about the level of investigations.

[Olmert] My sense was that the investigations in the Army are not good enough. This needs to be a continuous, incisive, and, if necessary, painful process. At the conference, I said that sometimes, some of the investigations which we accept are a salve."

[Background] Olmert singled out an investigation by a colonel in the Giv'ati Brigade for praise, and one by the Northern Command for notoriety. The latter, problematic investigation concerned an incident that occurred on 17 May in the village of Arnon at the foot of Beaufort in southern Lebanon. Yisra'el Ma'tuf of Moshav Gamzu was killed there in an encounter with terrorists. The minister received an investigation which seemed partial to him. He asked the Northern Command to complete the investigation. Difficult questions were raised regarding the nature of this encounter, and there was a debate between the Defense Ministry and the Army. As of his last day in the Defense Ministry, Arens had not received the completed investigation.

About two weeks ago, Yisra'el Ma'tuf's father wrote a letter to a newspaper in which he cries out in pain over the fact that he still does not know exactly what happened to his son and why.

[Olmert] We must not come to the point where a bereaved father writes a letter to a newspaper saying that he has not been told everything about his son's death. We in the [defense minister's] bureau received a partial investigation. The commander of the Northern Command himself (Yitzhaq Mordekhay, N.L.) wrote that the investigation must be completed. Minister Arens understood that he would receive the completed investigation. However, as of the time we left, we had not received it. I sent a memorandum, but we did not receive the completed investigation.

[Background] Yermi Olmert was born in Haifa 49 years ago. His parents are well-known members of BETAR [Yosef Trumpeldor Union; a paramilitary youth movement founded by Jabotinsky in 1921]. His father was a member of Knesset for Herut. Yermi Olmert grew up in Binyamina with his three brothers, where he studied and played soccer with Doron Ruven and Uri Sagi'. In the early sixties, he enlisted in NAHAL [Fighting Pioneer Youth] "under pressure from his friends," although he wanted to join the paratroops. Today he says that he regrets not enlisting in the paratroops.

After completing his military service, he was discharged. He then studied agriculture. He completed a master's degree and began to study for a doctorate when the Yom Kippur War broke out. At the end of the war, he enlisted in the career Army. In the Lebanon war, he commanded a reserve infantry brigade. It was the month of November. As commander of a sector in 'Aleih, east of Beirut, he attempted to mediate a cease-fire between the Christians and the Druze.

He was walking at the head of a group of people moving toward the Druze. A Druze fired a burst of bullets, hitting Olmert's feet and wounding him seriously, so that he still has restricted mobility in the soles of his feet. After rehabilitation, he returned to the brigade. He subsequently served as head of the Combat Doctrine Department in the Training Command. He had wanted to command NAHAL. However, Yitzhaq Rabin, then defense minister, did not consent to the appointment and instead named him to head the administration of the cadre. He already had one foot out the door, on discharge leave.

This was the transition between Rabin and Arens in 1990. Olmert met with Arens regarding another matter. He heard that the Defense Ministry's Rehabilitation Branch chief was retiring. He asked to compete for the position. Arens, and earlier Rabin, had told him that this branch was the CGS's purview.

[Olmert] I met with [Defense Ministry Director-General] David 'Ivri, and I was not convinced that he had made an effort in my regard. The Defense Ministry should be a leader in absorbing officers in uniform. It is absurd that I could not enter the competition at all, because they were only accepting internal bids, and a uniformed officer could not contend.

I became angry about this and went to Arens. This is absurd I told him. I am now considered to have faithfully performed my assigned duty and can thus leave, unrewarded. Regarding employment, we are the outsider officers. We are the first to stand at the front in war, but in the struggle for employment, we are on the outside.

[Background] This discussion with Arens two years ago did not improve the employment situation of retiring officers. However, it did bring Olmert back into the Army. Arens named him to be his military secretary.

[Levitsky] What happened in the Gulf war? Did Arens want, or not want, to take action against Iraq? Criticism of him was also heard in this regard.

[Olmert] Not long ago, I heard that senior officers spoke anonymously of "ministers who were bewildered by the Gulf war." I can only tell you that the time has not yet come, but I have much to say about the behavior of senior IDF officers in the deliberations of the cabinet, in the government, and in consultations with the defense minister during the Gulf War.

Arens thought that our lack of a response would, in the long term, be liable to damage our deterrent capability and be interpreted as weakness. Moreover, his estimations were based on what he was told by Army leaders. When Arens added up the Army's professional recommendations, the effect [of inaction] on our deterrence potential, and [Israel's] dependence on the United States, this led him to the perception that the war should not end without a response on our part. There were many opinions in the Army about how to act, what to do, and whether to act. The Army did not adopt a single, clear, resolute line the whole way.

[Levitsky] Arens was rather zealous about defense industry matters, especially the aircraft industry, so much so that he was sometimes nicknamed "minister of industry." However, his tenure saw a crisis in the Aircraft Industry and Military Industry [TA'AS], and a severe crisis in REFA'EL [the Combat Means Development Authority]. He also cut off defense trade with South Africa.

[Olmert] This is a part of Arens' integrity which no one can take away from him. If Israel makes a commitment with the United States that no American item will be contained in equipment sold to another country without U.S. approval, deception on our part would be inconceivable. I say to you, responsibly, that a number of cases of deception were uncovered in our industries.

This is what led to all of the discussions and to all of these dangles. What is the noise about? Is it about Israel transferring American technologies in violation of agreements which we have with the Americans? This is what Arens rebelled against, and why he was unwilling to move on to the daily agenda. The struggle was over this.

[Levitsky] To what extent did Arens become involved in appointments in the Army? Sometimes, one on the outside received the impression that he was responsible for the appointments of Yitzhaq Mordekhai to head the Northern Command and Dani Yatom to head the Central Command, and that his involvement was greater than usual. Baraq wanted to appoint 'Amiram Levin to the Northern Command, but Arens did not approve.

[Olmert] The defense minister does not as a rule initiate Army appointments. The CGS recommends assignments, drawing on a reservoir of suitable officers. There is no problem if no outlandish promotions based solely

on whim are made. In principle, the defense minister approves the CGS's recommendations.

Ehud has an analytical mind. We know him. Ehud is not a new invention of today. In that period, Ehud worked with himself. He made his own evaluation and mature judgments. I can say that he consulted with me on many occasions. I neither assigned nor appointed. But I was certainly in a position to help the CGS arrive at more correct solutions in three-person meetings [between Arens, Baraq, and Olmert].

However, ultimately, the CGS made the senior assignments. Except for trouble regarding 'Amiram Levin, who represents an attempt to break an ironclad rule (i.e., that a veteran major general N.L. is customarily appointed to head the Northern Command), in no case was the defense minister compelled to reject an appointment made by the CGS. You do not know Ehud. You have no idea how dominant and militant a CGS he is regarding appointments. In the end, Arens always gave him backing and consented to what he wanted.

[Levitsky] The CGS's relations with the Director-General of Defense Ministry, David 'Ivri, are also problematic. This applies to both [former CGS] Dan Shomron and now to Baraq.

[Olmert] This is truly problematic. In this debate, the operant rules were not always upheld. I cannot assess who of the two caused the tension. However, the military establishment has a basic reservation toward the Defense Ministry. They tried to accuse 'Ivri of interfering in matters within the Army's purview, such as procurement. This is incorrect. However, an ongoing problem does exist.

In the Army, there are short tenures of three to four years, after which one moves on. Any decision made by Ehud today will clearly affect the next CGS. 'Ivri is already in his third tenure as director-general. He has made his mark. Everyone will say that he has been the most professional director-general. He is very dominant and has merited special seniority with defense ministers. 'Ivri did not come for the purpose of being another minor official concerned about the publications director counting off properly. When two very strong, intelligent bodies with high self-awareness come into contact, there are sparks.

[Background] After the change [in government], Olmert acted, as usual, like a consummate gentleman. He approached Rabin and told him that, inasmuch as Rabin is now wearing both the defense minister's hat and the prime minister's hat, there was room for only one brigadier general at his side, and, because 'Azri'el Nevo remains in this position in Jerusalem, Olmert said, he would go.

[Olmert] Rabin told me at the time, "I think that you should stay in the Army." At the farewell which they held for me at the defense minister's bureau, Rabin told

Ehud, "I am entrusting Yermi to your hands, I ask that you assign him in the IDF."

[Levitsky] Is the fact that he did not assign you, when you were retiring from the IDF, related to the position which you held, i.e., because you were between the hammer and the anvil in the friction between Arens and Baraq?

[Olmert] I estimated that Ehud, for truly objective reasons, would have nothing to offer me in Israel. There simply was nothing. However, I did feel disappointment. He made me an offer which was impossible to accept. He offered me a position requiring that I leave immediately for a distant country. He knows that, for family reasons, I cannot leave immediately. He told me that he is not recommending that I go to Europe next summer, because it is far and he is troubled by what would be said.

I told him that it is unbecoming of him to use this notion of "what would be said." I told him, you are doing many things despite what will be said. I told him, look Ehud, I have not said this until today, but I am allowing myself to say that there is not even one brigadier general in the Army who has served as continuously as I have in the positions which I have filled. I did not leave to study at the Army's expense.

You also know, I told him, that immediately after I was injured, when I left rehabilitation hopping on crutches, with 80 percent disability, I returned to continuous service. If, after such service, what stands between me and Europe in the summer is "what will be said," I ask that you think.

In the next meeting, I told him that I can retire. I know that it will be said, here is another frustrated one. But I am not on the list of the frustrated. Excuse me, boldness is not my style. I do not speak of injustices. Yermi is leaving service with a great deal of satisfaction. However, the defense minister has asked the CGS to assign me, and I am not assigned.

[Background] Thus, Olmert is leaving for civilian life and to look for work. What is in store for him? He fears that his name, Olmert, will now become a stumbling block for him. This name, he says, is chasing after him. When Rabin did not appoint him to NAHAL, the reason, it was said, was that he is an Olmert. When Arens appointed him as his military secretary, it was said that it was because he is an Olmert.

[Olmert] In my civilian life, I do not expect to pay over and over because of my name. It cannot be that I must now pay a price because I am an Olmert.